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ImagineFX

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Future

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Storemags

S'mores by Dan Seegmiller

Welcome... to an insider job



Do you dream of working in a video games studio? Can you imagine seeing your creature designs, grand environments or unique character developments in a AAA title? If so, you've come to the right place. This issue we've enlisted the help of artists at the top of their game (no pun intended) to arm you with the skills and inspiration needed to grapple your way to your ideal job.

id Software's Hugo Martin not only shares his art portfolio of breathtaking brilliance, on page 52, but also gives insight into what it takes to break into the industry, on page 80. It makes for sobering reading. It's a straight-talking piece on the wide variety of art fundamentals you need to learn and the portfolio bursting with vibrant art that you'll need to have under your arm to get any chance of a footing in the industry. Nobody said it would be easy...

Elsewhere, I enjoyed reading about Dave Kendall's foray into the workings of Manga Studio 5, on page 86. Can this affordable piece of software become your default art tool for painting? If you have any suggestions on what software we should be covering, drop me a line.

Our new traditional section is also settling very well into its home at the back of the magazine. I particularly enjoyed the insight and honesty from Justin Gerard this issue (and the story of his first paid commission – wow!). Take a look at his First Impressions, on page 114. Remember, if there's an artist, particular art tool or skill you'd like us to feature in this new section, or any other, please let us know.

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
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Our special cover for subscribers this issue.



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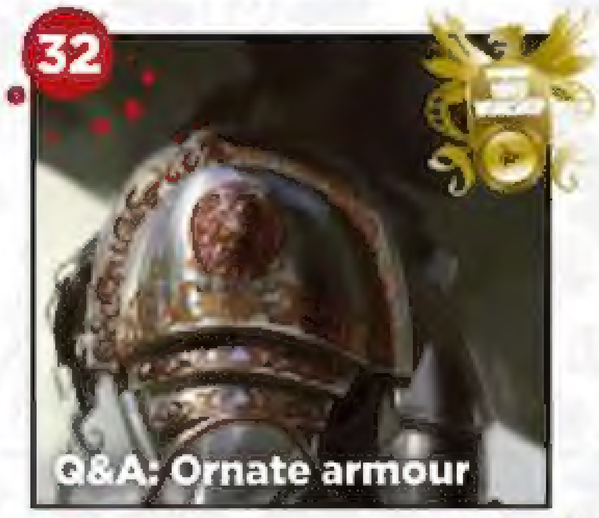


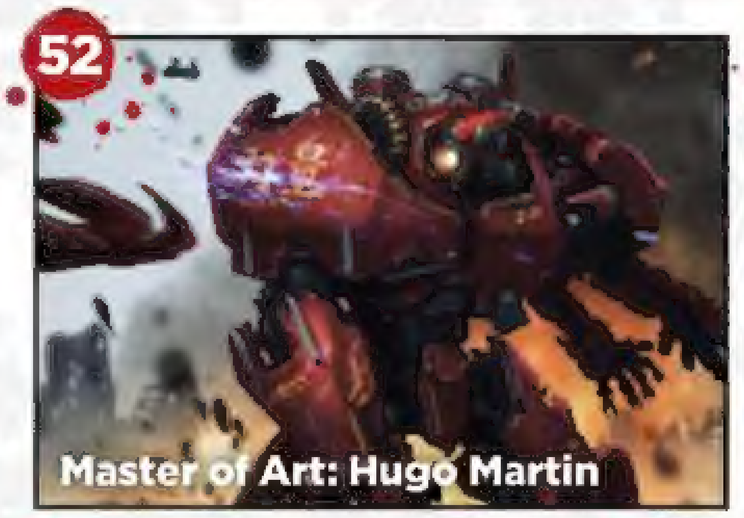
Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



See page 8 for the best new art















Storemags.com

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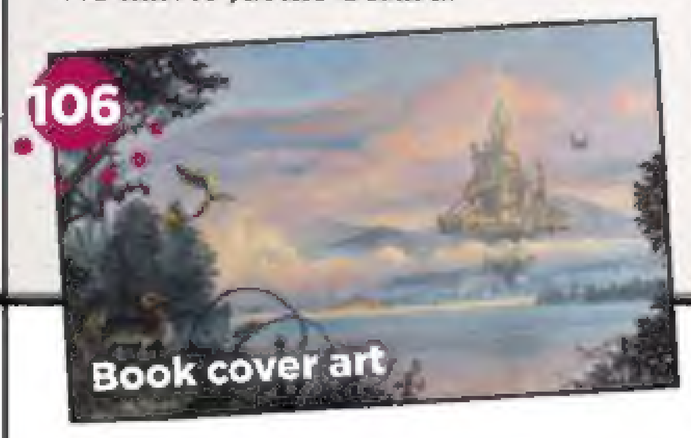
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ImagineFX Resources

As well as our workshop and Q&A videos, we also have a clip from Eric Keller's guide to Maya 2014, and a complete video lesson from Digital-Tutors!



PLUS! WIPS, FINAL ART AND VIDEOS FROM THIS ISSUE, AND WALLPAPER!

VIDEO SAMPLE

Introduction to Maya 2014

Check out this clip from Eric Keller's in-depth tour of Maya 2014. We review his video on page 96.

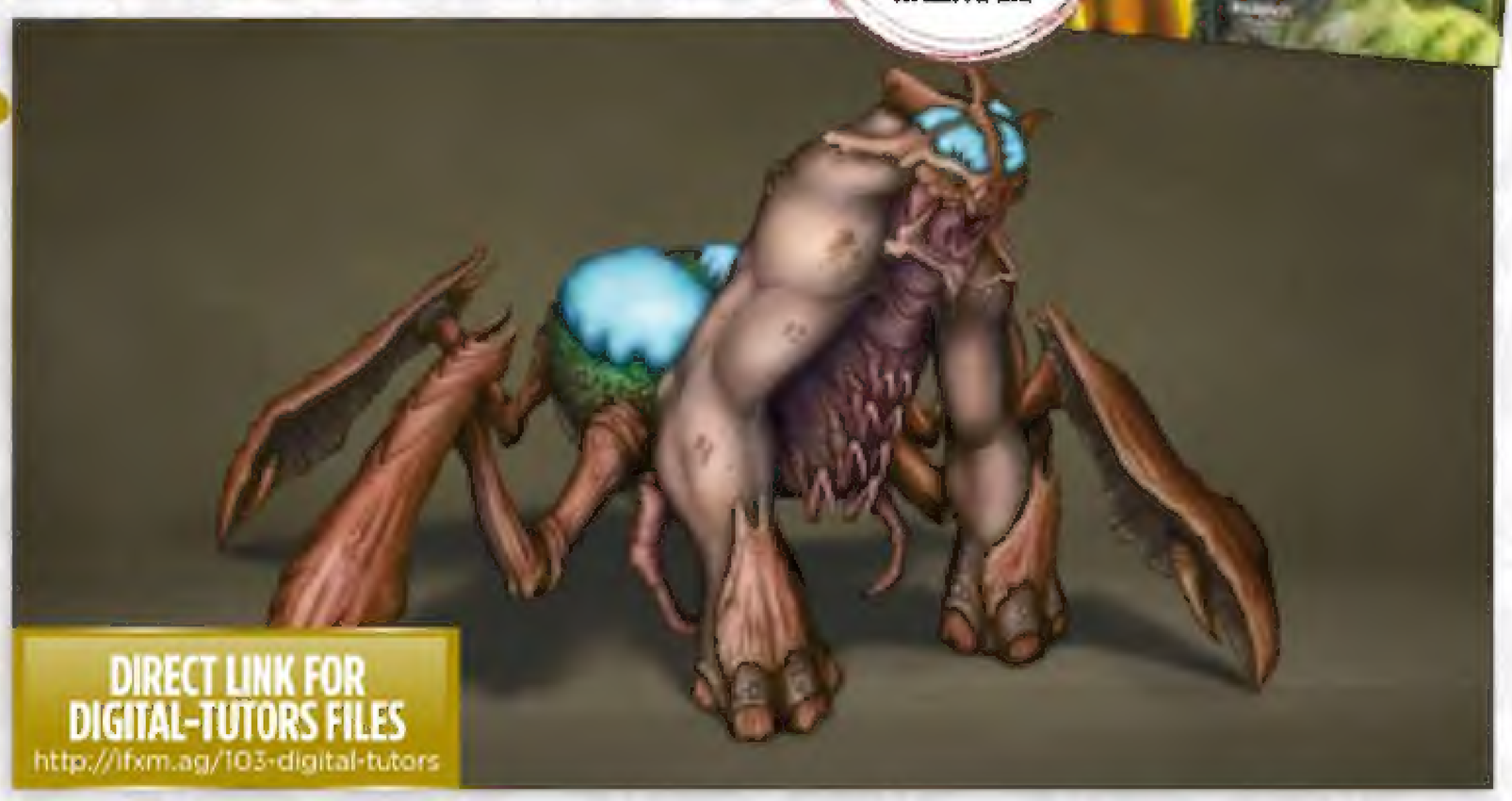


VIDEO TUTORIAL

Design a game boss

In this three-hour workshop from Digital-Tutors, you'll learn how to bring your game boss concept to life.





ImagineFX
Fantasy & Sci-Fi Digital Art

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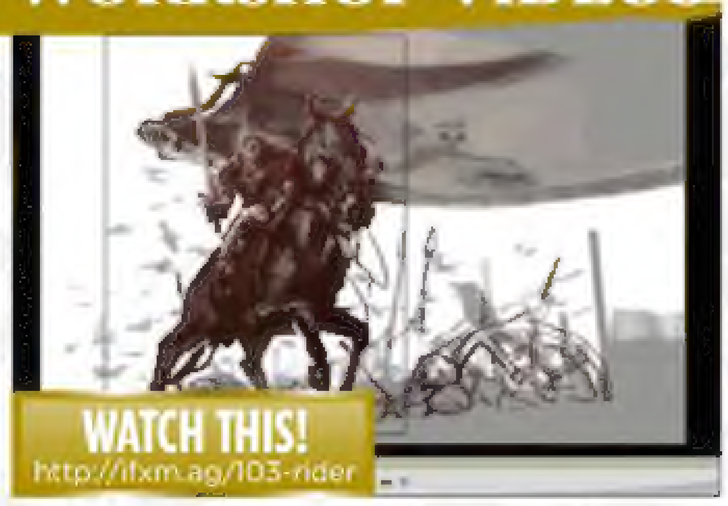
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EXCLUSIVE VIDEO TUITION!

Watch our videos to gain a unique insight into how our artists create their stunning art

WORKSHOP VIDEOS



Bartłomiej Gaweł

Discover how to depict a dynamic video game scene by balancing key elements.
Plus WIPs, brushes and final image



Anthony Scott Waters

Instantly convey your ideas and story in a single piece of creature concept art.
Plus WIPs, brushes and final image



OVER 10 HOURS of workshop and Q&A video to watch and learn from!

Dave Kendall

Find out what Manga Studio 5 has to offer and create a steampunk behemoth.
Plus WIPs and final image

Q&A VIDEOS



John Staub

Learn how to paint an ornate design on a shiny metal surface.
Plus WIPs and final image



Jake Murray

Design and paint a cluttered steampunk environment, then add light sources.
Plus WIPs and final image



Mark Molnar

Discover the quick and easy way to depict fire in your fantasy artwork.
Plus WIPs and final image



Mark Molnar

Picture a doomed planet as seen from space, and give the scene a storyline.
Plus WIPs and final image



Don Seegmiller

Find out how to realistically show blood from a wound dispersing in water.
Plus WIPs and final image



Paco Rico Torres

Paint gruesome battle wounds, using colour for extra visual impact.
Plus WIPs and final image

PLUS Videos on using three distinct textures in a drawing, depicting a rainy city scene and capturing motion in a line sketch, as well as extensive WIP files and final images from a host of top artists, including Brian Sum, Hugo Martin, Tony Foti and Fred Augis.

185 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING...



ANT'S MEDIUM-SOFT ROUND PENCIL
Anthony Scott Waters uses this brush for creating texture and blending.



PINCEAU BROSSE POIL 1
Fred Augis is able to create rough calligraphic shapes with this brush.



TEXTURE BRUSH
One of the brushes Brian Sum uses to depict scratches and dirt effects.

Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR FANTASY ART

ImagineFX ARTIST MONTH

Jacek Pilarski

LOCATION: Poland
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MEDIA: Photoshop, 3ds Max, Maya, Vue, Nuke, ZBrush, World Machine 2, After Effects, Illustrator



Polish artist Jacek is an exponent of matte painting. "I like to create worlds that are as realistic as possible," he says. "I use a wide range of programs that help me make believable landscapes – from concept to final animation." And he reveals that, "In my free time, I walk in the mountains and take thousands of pictures to add to my library, which is a must for every matte painter."



1 THE PATH TO BARBARIAN VILLAGE "Playing my favourite barbarian in Diablo III inspired this piece. I used Vue, and the final composition was done in Photoshop. Usually, I create colourful pieces, but this time I went into a dark and gloomy mood."

2 JUNGLE DAWN "This matte painting was done for my friend Dax Pandhi from QuadSpinner. He gave me a nice render and I did my best to make it special, using 3D and textures."

3 SORCERESS AND WATER DRAGON "For this piece, I combined digital painting with photo manipulation. I wanted to create an epic scene with a sexy sorceress riding a water dragon."

4 ANCIENT COLONISATION "This is another dark and moody piece. In it, we see a primitive man observing a weird, organic alien ship as it sails across the sky."



ARTIST OF THE MONTH
Congratulations, Jacek – you've won yourself a copy of Exposé 11 and d'artiste: Character Design! To find out more about these two great books, go to www.ballisticpublishing.com.

Artist crit

Tony Foti, a freelance illustrator for D&D and Fantasy Flight Games, gives Jacek's work the thumbs up



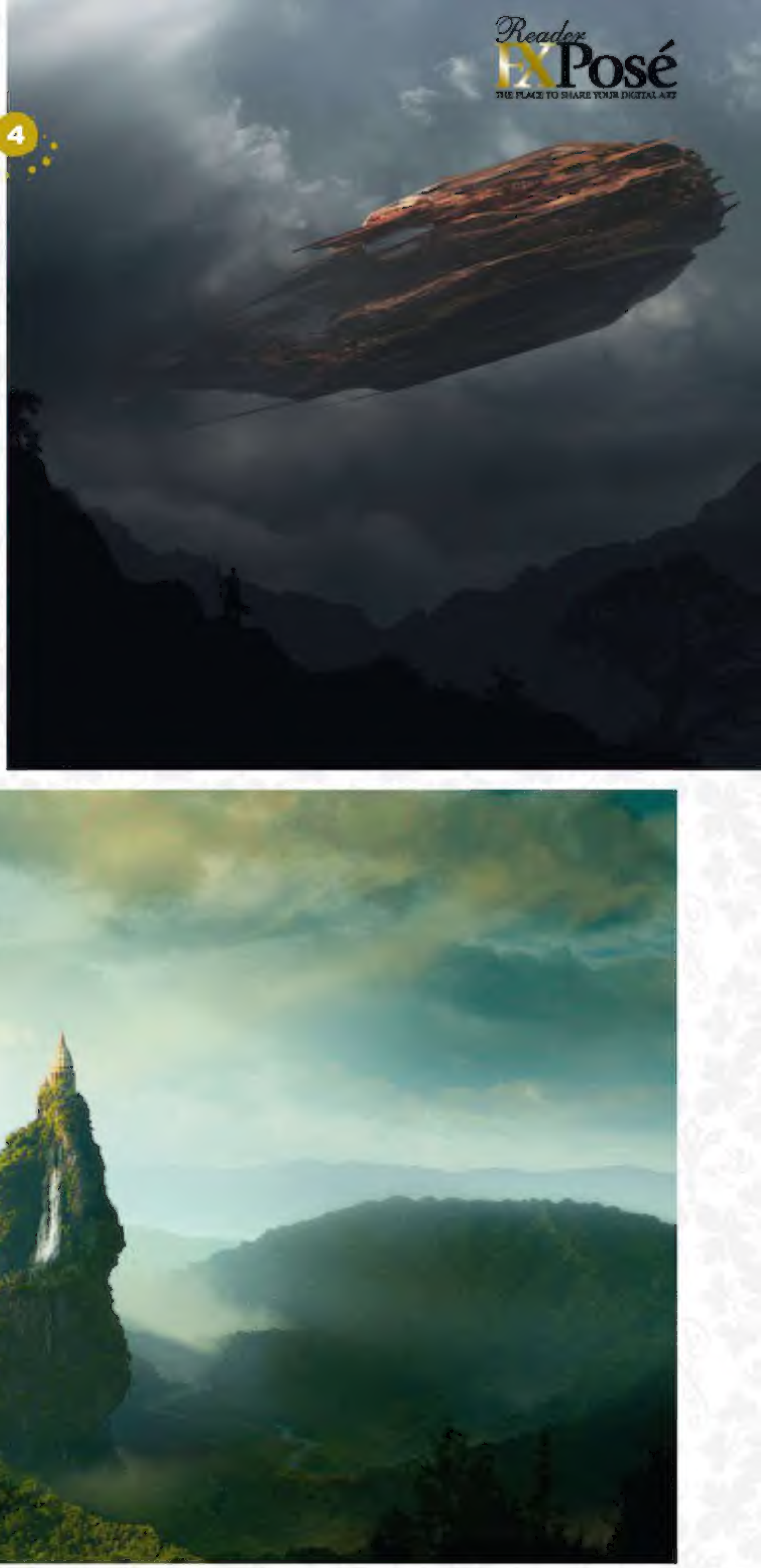
"I love the atmosphere of this piece, and there's a great rhythm in the way Jacek alternates between hard and soft edges. It's a real mood setter."

FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imaginefx.com

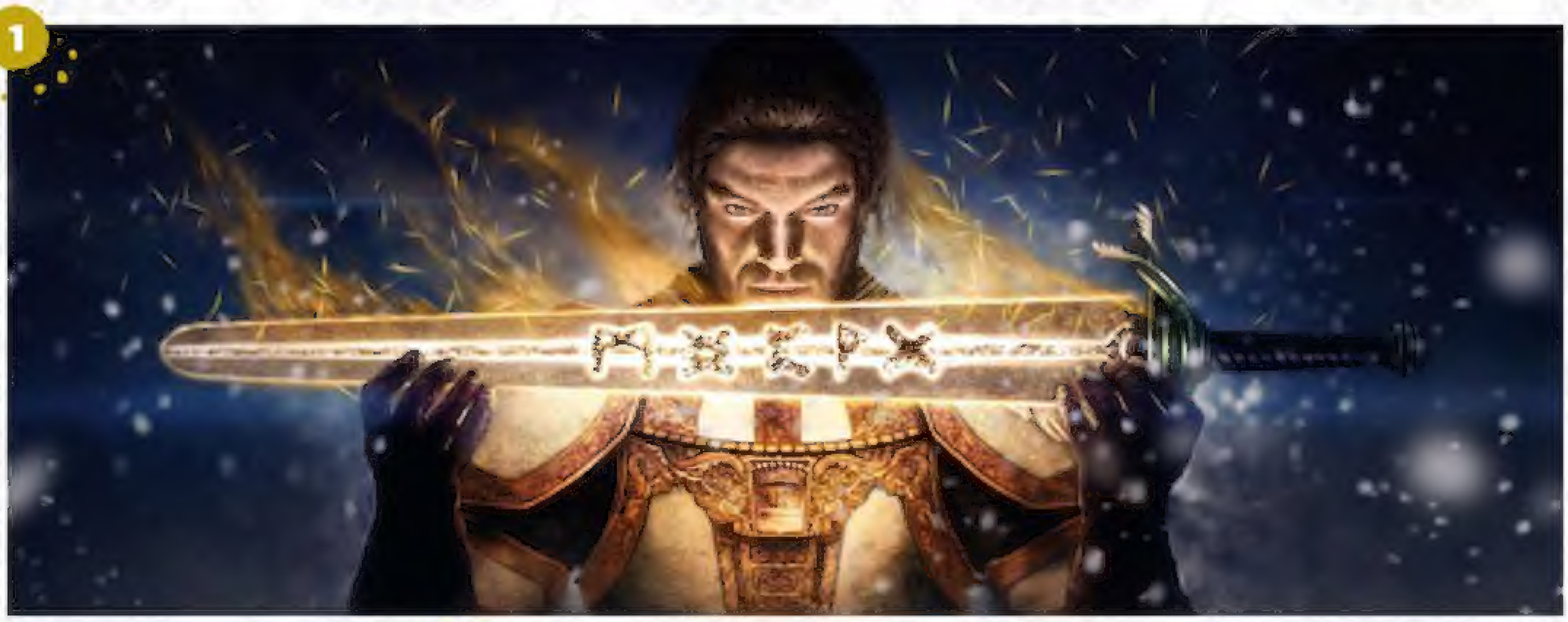
3



4



1



Keith Seymour

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MEDIA: Photoshop



Do you find artwork, promotional material and instruction manuals just as exciting as the products they were created for? Keith does. It's what led the freelancer to focus his artistic endeavours on not just illustration, but concept and marketing art – something he does across a portfolio as dark and macabre as it is diverse and memorable.

"I've always loved leafing though the manuals of my games," Keith says, "or staring at posters or cover art. I love the idea of creating a captivating moment or a piece of great design that grabs someone's attention immediately, and stays with them forever."

2



1 RUNE SWORD "This is my attempt to update an old member's loyalty banner from the forums of the online game Runescape. I wanted to showcase my skills to Jagex, which makes the game. This is a good way of proving your enthusiasm to a company and getting it to notice you. They appreciate the time you take to focus on their IPs."

2 GOBLIN "I had been painting a lot of smooth-skinned hero types and wanted to redress the balance. I enjoy painting this kind of texture and detail more than the handsome hero face. There's something addictive about getting stuck into all those horrible crevices and fleshing out the details."

3 AXES OF EVIL "This Desert Shaman, with enchanted axes of evil, leads a host of undead in a deadly sandstorm. Inspiration can come from anywhere, and in this case a photo of toy designer friend Nick Whitmore trying on chain mail was just the ticket."

3



George Lovesy

LOCATION: New Zealand
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MEDIA: Photoshop, Painter



"I was always playing video games and drawing as a kid," George explains. "So when I got a little older and found out that I could possibly make a career out it, I set my mind to doing exactly that."

The Kiwi recently graduated in character animation and digital creativity from Animation College NZ, and is now a concept artist at Auckland-based independent video game studio Grinding Gear Games.

Working under the name Novum, the artist has a portfolio full of epic and dystopic landscapes, and futuristic, otherworldly character designs. "In the future," George says, "I would love to get into movie work, matte painting and possibly put out my own graphic novel."

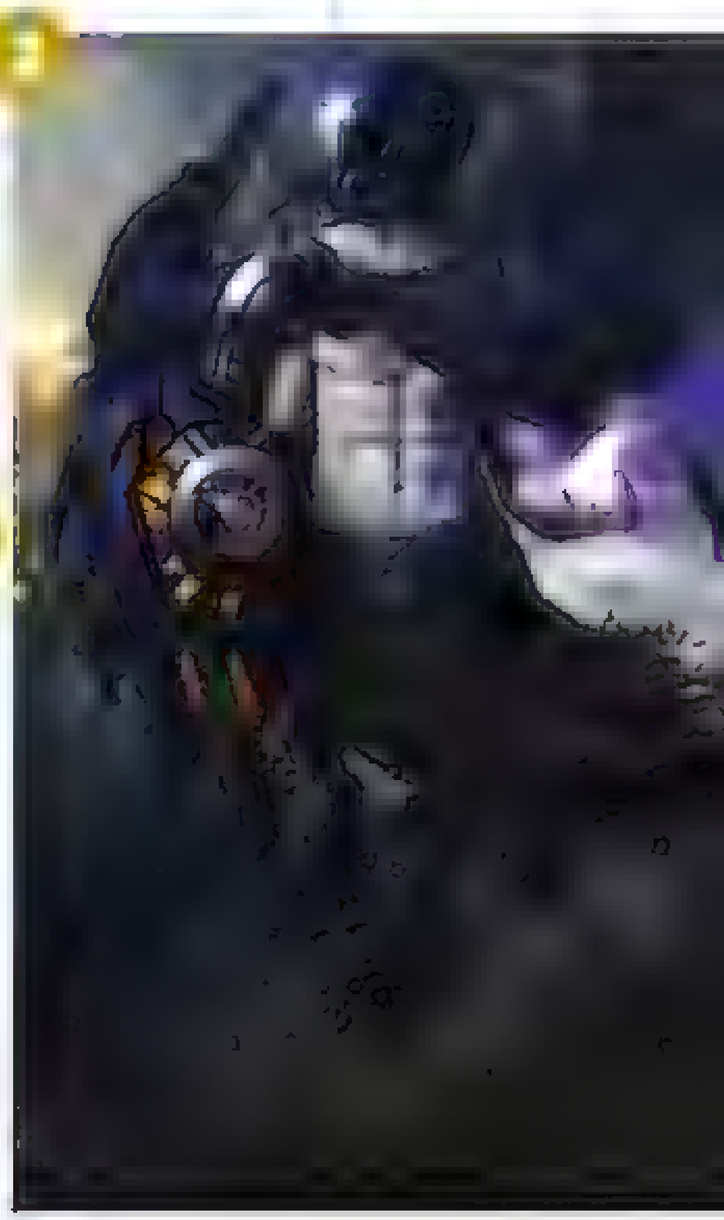


IMAGINEFX CRIT



"George is clearly a versatile artist. I like the dynamic Last Breath, successful in its efforts to convey movement, and Android Aries, a smart piece of character design you can easily imagine as the lead character in a video game."

Gary Evans
Staff Writer





1 LAST BREATH "For this piece I was all about trying to capture movement using simple composition to maximum effect. I like how it turned out. It's one of few artworks that I'm still happy with after finishing it."

2 ANDROID ARIES "Dan LuVisi's Gabriel loosely inspired this piece. I wanted to portray a badass character that looked like he could take you out with minimal effort."

3 HALLELUJAH CITY "I always liked the background art in the Final Fantasy series for PlayStation 1, especially FF9, so that was a big inspiration for this piece. I wanted to portray a city that was powered by a god-like energy."

Joseph C Descallar

US
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Photoshop



Joseph is a freelance artist based in San Francisco. The area is at the centre of a global entertainment industry, meaning he works primarily in the fields of video game concept art and character design, as well as illustration.

"Being an Asian-American, my style is best described as a hybrid of classical European and Japanese animation. I try to incorporate the movement and actions you see in animation into my illustrations, to give it the same energy."

B.U.M.S. "Here's one of the characters for my own IP, which I've amusingly called B.U.M.S. Wasabi is a swordsman with a passion for 90s hip-hop and sneakers."

B.U.M.S. II "Another character from B.U.M.S. Jerry 'Salad Boy' Kemp is a gunslinger who doesn't eat meat."

UNTITLED "The phrase "software update" was the innocuous-sounding spark behind this piece."



IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Ah, there's nothing better than casting my tired deadline eyes on some gorgeously unique character art, and Joseph delivers these fresh concepts in spades. I've already visited his website to see more of his art."

Chris Howlett
Edi...

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Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

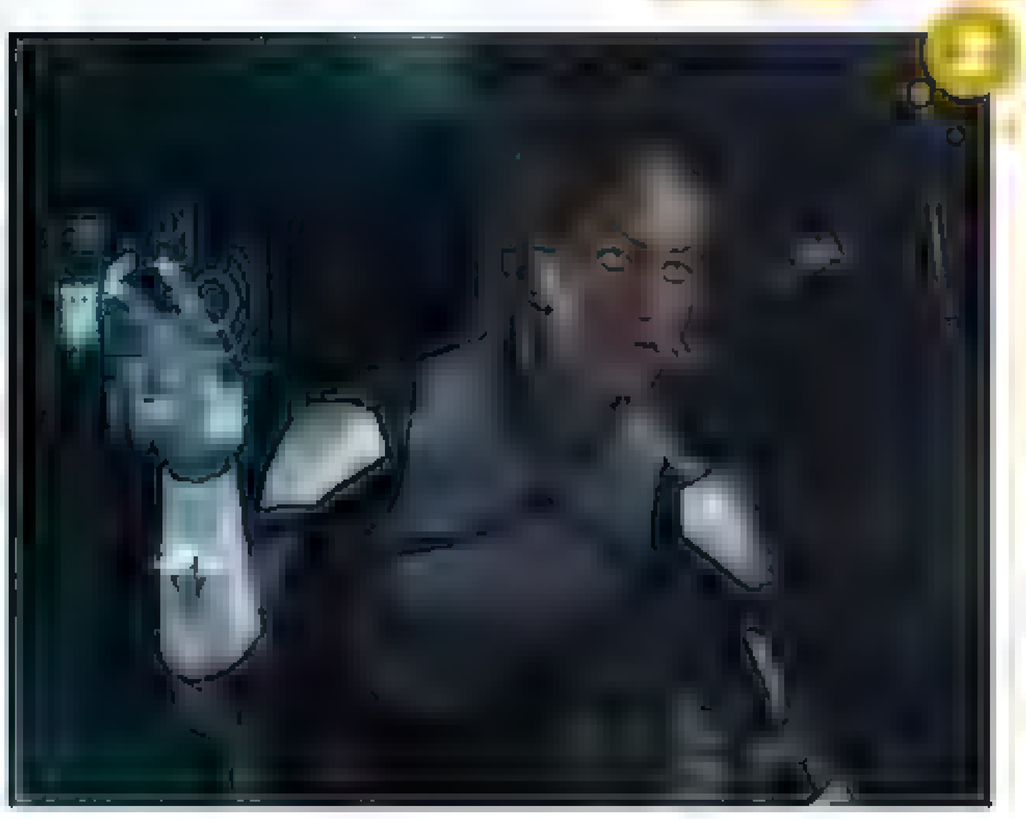
Alejandro García

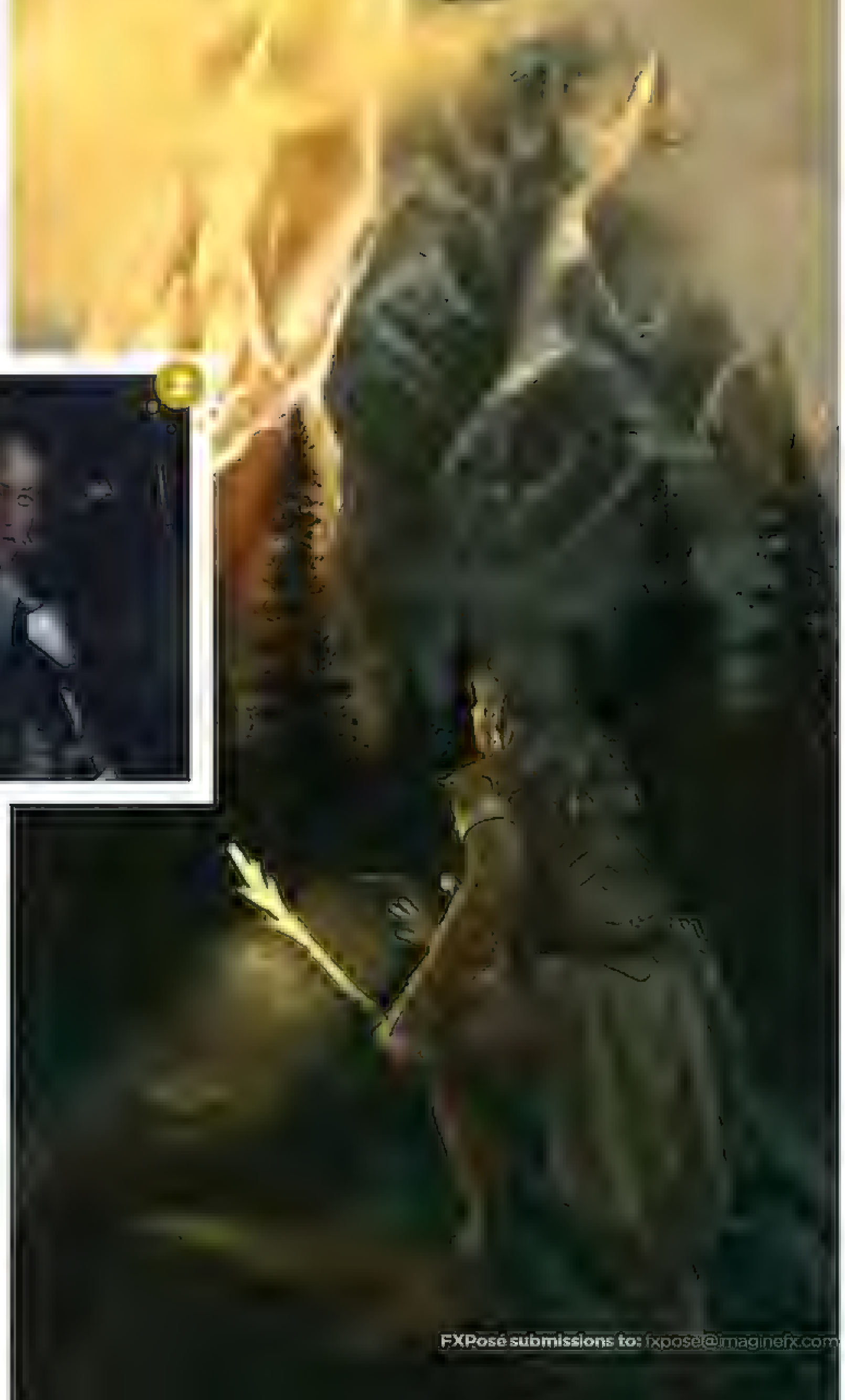
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MEDIA: Photoshop, Illustrator



Alejandro is a graphic designer, and is still relatively new to the world of digital painting. "Before painting digitally I was under the impression that to improve, the only thing I needed to do was to draw better," he says. "But I soon discovered this is just the tip of the iceberg! To be a successful artist, you need to keep practising and continue to be inspired by other artists. I find it encouraging to see work from so many people around the globe."

Alejandro says his artistic goals are always changing, but he's always striving for new ways to improve.





THE FANG IN THE FOREST "This is one of my more recent pieces. The challenge was showing only the hint of a dragon, and making sure that the elven woman didn't steal attention from the mountain – the eponymous Fang."

INFILTRATION "This is one of my rare sci-fi pieces, harkening back to the days when I used to play Shadowrun. One of the most challenging aspects was coming up with a credible way to create the holographic display: I ended up using a three-projector setup built into the infiltrator's bracer."

FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imaginefx.com

3dcreativemags.com



Jacinta L Raphael
US
www.centi.deviantart.com
seirvitas@gmail.com
Photoshop, Open Canvas, Paint Tool SAI



Jacinta has always seen art as "an opportunity to slip into unknown worlds and realise dreams on a page." In return, she's dedicated to her craft, honing her skills by spending countless hours studying tutorials and practising – sometimes taking years to finish a single piece. Jacinta also believes the best way to develop is by both observing the world around you and by looking within to find your own voice.

"When life seemed ready to crush me, art became my oasis. Art has saved my life, helped me cope and overcome burdens, and become my passion, obsession, a way of life."



"I'm impressed by how Jacinta has subtly blended the stained glass window into the rest of the fantasy scene in My Crystal Throne. It's also interesting how a brightly coloured scene can still convey a melancholy mood."

MY CRYSTAL THRONE "This image was a gift for someone very near and dear to me. I'd always been fascinated by the ideas of stained glass and fairy tales and often bring the two together in my works. This particular character, Sidhe, has lost their wing, but the memory of them remains in the glass behind them. It was difficult making the tree and background fade into the glass, but it was a fun experiment."

DESERT BATTLE "I'd noticed that much of my art lacked a sense of motion. I sketched this in hope of stepping out of my comfort zone and overcoming one of my weaknesses. I tried to use every part of the body – from the exaggerated movement of the waist to the shifting of the hair – to show just how the body was twisting as it rushed its way through the desert."

Reader Posé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

Olivier Dubard

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MEDIA: Maya, ZBrush, Photoshop



A quote on Olivier's website says: 'We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.' It's attributed to George Bernard Shaw, and perfectly encapsulates the painter's attitude towards art. "Playing and discovering is what got me into digital art," he says.

Olivier is a graduate of the Gnomon School of Visual Effects in Hollywood, and works as a freelance concept 2D and 3D artist. Having worked as a modeller on Call of Duty: Black Ops 2 trailer, the creative is currently working on top-secret projects in movies and television, but one day plans to open his own studio.





SYBERIAN WOLF "I love creatures and I was inspired by all of these MMO RPGs, so I did this piece because I also would love to work for games as well and not only for film. This piece is all painting. I didn't use 3D."

THE ARRIVAL "I have a soft spot for robots. I used 3D on this image, posed the characters and painted them over. It took me about a day to finish."

FALLING DOWN "I wanted to use painting techniques that would help me achieve quick results. So I created a 3D base and painted over it. I was keen to give the impression of birds of prey swooping down on to their target."

THE HUNTRESS "I had to urge to channel Frazetta into my art. Anatomy and armour are some of my favourite things to draw and I wanted to maintain a painterly feel."



IMAGINEFX CRIT

"Cold palettes and cool perspectives make each of Olivier's art works worth a second glance. Whether 'channelling Frazetta' into his art in The Huntress, or the air fight of Falling Down, these are wildly varied and loads of fun."
Beren Neale
Digital Editor

SUBMIT YOUR ART TO FXPOSÉ

Send up to five pieces of your work, along with their titles, an explanation of your techniques, a photo of yourself and contact details. Images should be sent as 300DPI JPEG files.

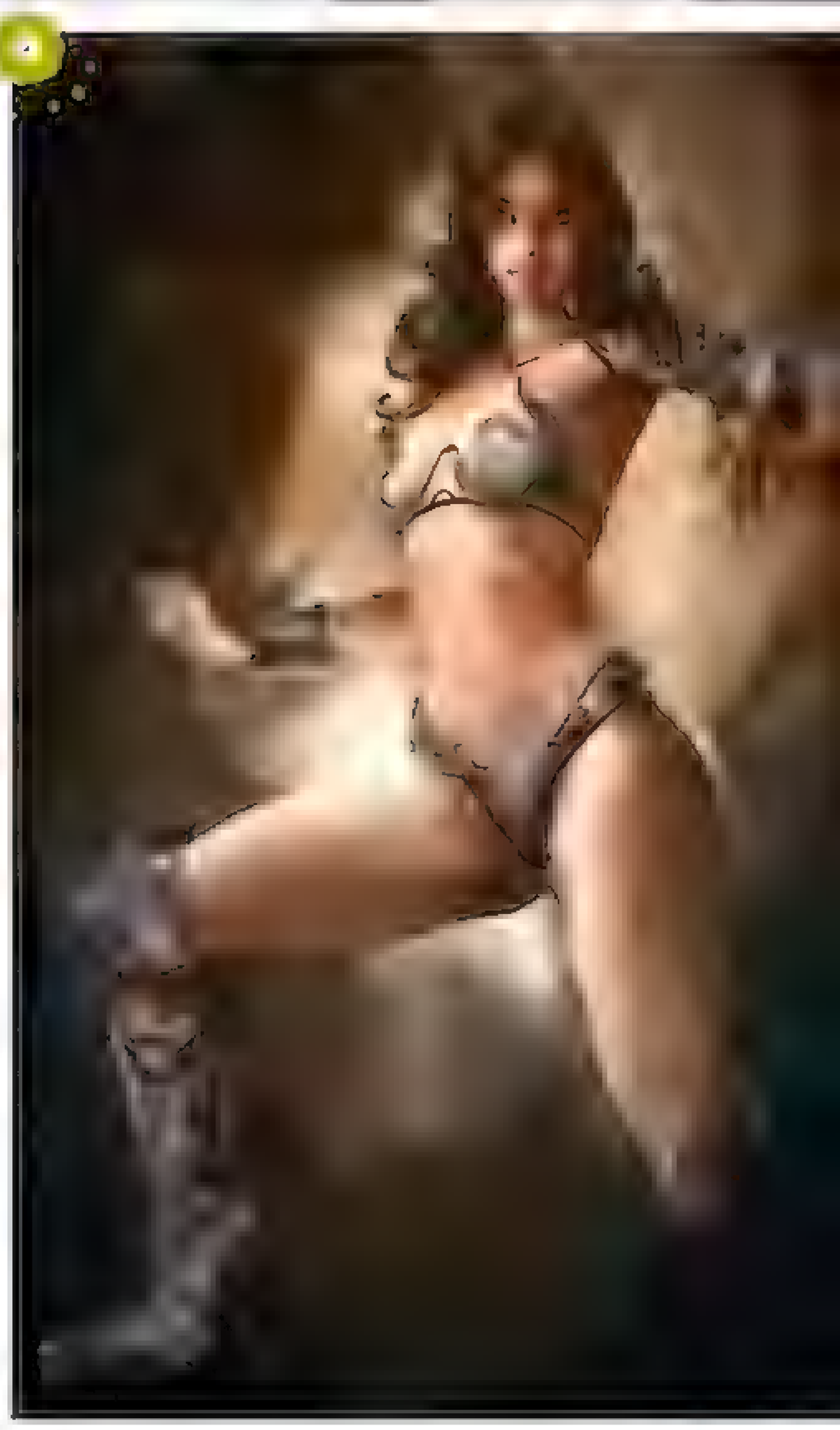
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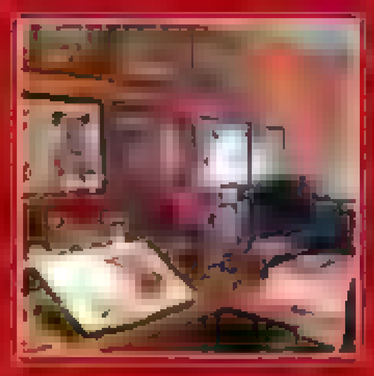
"Fitting everything into that small package" was the challenge facing art director Michael Dashow and his team at Kabam, the studio behind free game The Hobbit Kingdoms of Middle-earth



SECOND ART WORLD WAR

Popular online art competition Dominance War met its Waterloo in 2010. But founder Fredrik Hultqvist is bringing it back with a bang.

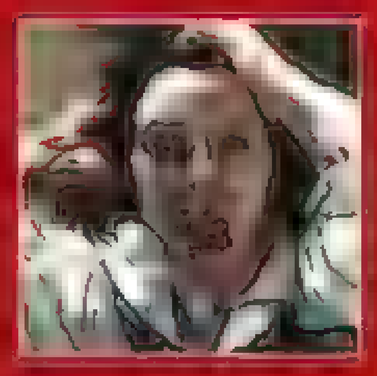
Page 21



A CORNY ART SPACE

Italian comic book illustrator Simone Bianchi has a studio amidst the idyllic sounding Tuscan cornfields. No, you can't holiday there.

Page 22



ZOMBIE CLASSICS

There are never enough images of rotting flesh in the world, which is why Dublin art students have turned classic portraits into paintings of the undead.

Page 24

Games on the move

Upwardly mobile With tablet and mobile video games on the rise, we talk to the studios leading the charge about their new artistic challenges

It's the fine art of taking the macro and making it micro. Myriad characters, an intricate plot and the expansive worlds they live in – all painted on a four-inch canvas. This is the challenge facing mobile and tablet video game developers.

"Artistically," Michael Dashow says, "that's what it's all about. It's fitting everything into that small package – both the screen and the game's download size. It can be a challenge to cram in all of the user interface (UI) elements and make the game fun and easy to play – despite the fact that your finger will be covering up a chunk of the screen in order to play."

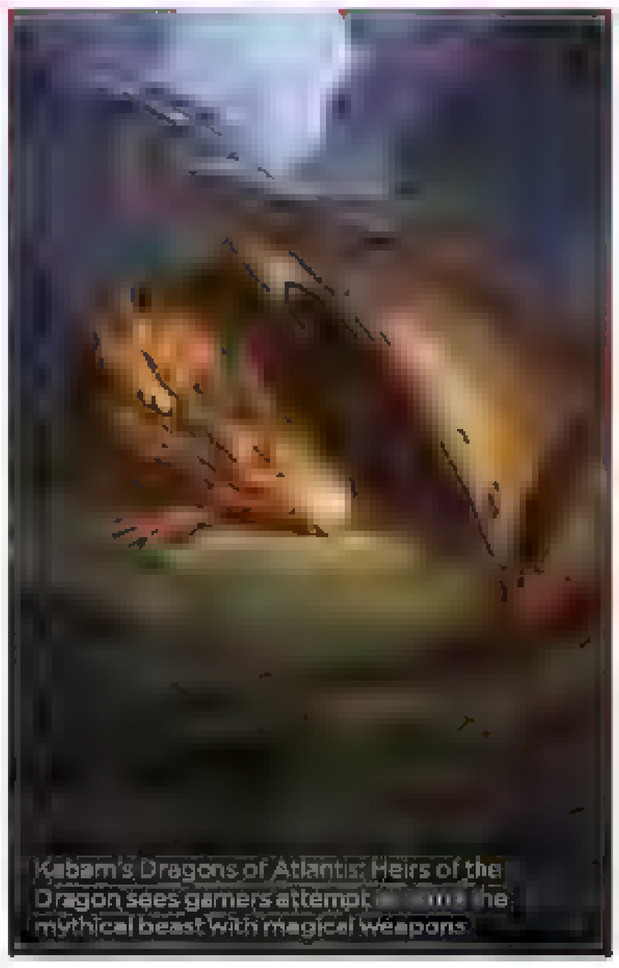


By the end of 2013, there'll be more than 30 million smartphone users in the UK alone (according to market researcher eMarketer) and over a quarter of this population will use tablets. In 2010, smartphone and tablet games accounted for just five per cent of the total spend on video games. The figure is set to rise to 19 per cent this year, it's a trend mirrored in Europe and North America.

The increase is attributed, in part, to gaming on social networks and the rise of the casual gamer. A spike in female gamers has also been registered.



Kabam's game The Hobbit: Kingdoms of Middle-earth is set in the time of the Great Dragons.



Kabam's Dragons of Atlantis: Heirs of the Dragon sees gamers attempt to slay the mythical beast with magical weapons.

> **It's challenging to cram in the UI elements and make the game fun and easy to play**



Wizards releases its first ever iPad game, Lords of Waterdeep, in November

Michael Sellers is senior art director at San Francisco-based interactive entertainment company Kabam, which came to prominence with Facebook strategy game Kingdoms of Camelot. He joined Kabam to help oversee the company's move into the mobile market. Over a two-decade career Michael's witnessed sweeping changes within the industry, and thinks he knows what's needed to succeed in the new era.

"You need to plan for a much smaller screen," he says. "If you're playing on a tablet and especially on a phone, characters and UI need to read clearly. Mobile devices are getting better processors all the time and we're focused on bringing console quality games to tablets and smartphones."

What Michael particularly likes about working on mobile games, compared to console or PC titles, is the opportunity to be part of a smaller, tighter team and the shorter development cycles.

Spiderweb Software also prides itself on its "small-team friendly" ethos. The Seattle-based developer is behind cult RPG titles Avernum, Geneforge and Blades of Exile.

"We tend to the needs of old-school gamers on Windows, Mac and tablets," Spiderweb founder Jeff Vogel says. "He sees his biggest challenge as 'remaking the interface' because there's a marked difference between a mouse or keyboard and touch controls.



DANIEL GELON

The D&D senior art director on moving into the mobile market

How has the move to mobile games affected the look and feel of Dungeons & Dragons?
Working on mobile and tablets has been liberating for the visual representation of the D&D brand. We get to explore a variety of different visual styles that fall outside the classically illustrated images of the pen and paper game. The most enjoyable aspect has been working with some of the most talented and expert partners in mobile and casual games. Whether you're a hardcore fan or new to D&D, casual and mobile games enable you to experience the game on your own terms.

Were there artistic challenges?
Modern video games offer visions more fantastic than the average person can imagine and this is where the challenge comes in. What the viewer used to fill in on their own now has to be visualised and created, and all the things we never had to think about before are now basic to creating a wholly visual experience. Does a beholder blink? What sound does an orc make? Do goblins walk bow-legged? What does that spell look like when cast?

What can we expect from future D&D digital releases?
We have fans who don't roleplay, but love reading about D&D worlds and lore in books. Our goal is to continue that strong sense of narrative and fantasy. We have a variety of different play experiences available that aren't strictly roleplaying, and we're striving to make all of our offerings true to the essence of what we feel D&D is: rich narratives, unique characters and monsters, and that sense of heroic adventure.



Daniel is senior art director at Wizards of the Coast, which releases iPad game Lords of Waterdeep this month.

www.wizards.com

Continued from previous page...

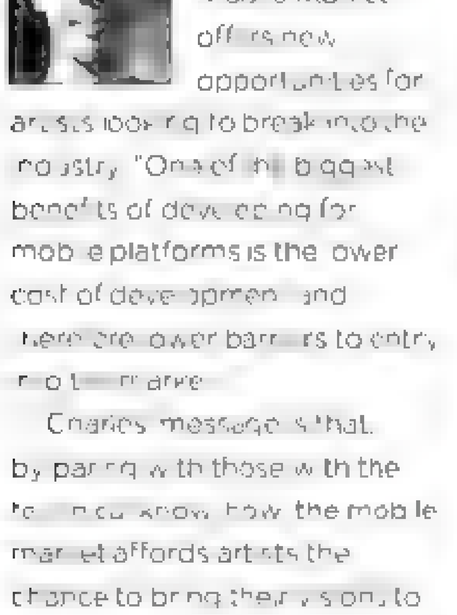


Avadon 2: The Corruption is part of Spiderweb's popular RPG series.

It's also important that the [illegible] of a game isn't compromised because of the platform it's created for. It's this stage of the process that takes up the most time and care, says Jeff.

Charles Cross, owner of US start-up mobile games developer Valorware, says expanding mobile market offers new opportunities for artists looking to break into the industry. "One of the biggest benefits of developing for mobile platforms is the lower cost of development and therefore lower barriers to entry into the marketplace."

Charles' message is that, by partnering with those with the technical know-how, the mobile market affords artists the chance to bring their visions to fruition without the backing of big budgets. "It's now much easier to have our content published and recognised," Charles concludes, "even without strong marketing efforts."



Valorware's 9th Dawn brings an old-school RPG aesthetic to the iPad.



New Blizzard release

Competition Win a beta key for the online card game

Blizzard Entertainment has unveiled a new strategy card game set in its Warcraft universe. Hearthstone: Heroes of Warcraft sees the developer "step out of its comfort zone" to create one of its most accessible games to date.

Players "sling spells, summon creatures and command the heroes of Warcraft" in one-on-one online battles, building a deck around one of nine iconic classes from the franchise.

"When attaching a licensee to this game, we immediately went for the World of Warcraft universe," Blizzard lead artist Ben Thompson says. "World of Warcraft has elements of the epic and the light-hearted, the serious and the silly. Because of that broadness, every player of age or gender will find some aspect of Hearthstone to latch on to."

The free-to-play title initially comes with around 300 cards. You can add more with booster packs, which can be purchased or earned in-game.

The game, currently in closed beta, is available on Mac and Windows, with an iPad version and other platforms to follow. A full release planned later this year. Find out more at **www.battle.net**. For you chance to win one of five beta keys, visit **http://ifxm.ag/blizzardcomp**.

Calling card

Perfect hand Applibot's latest online card game Chaos Drive shows a new artistic direction



Applibot, the Japanese online card game company famed for employing some of the world's best digital fantasy artists, has unveiled a new title. Chaos Drive is set in the near future, a dystopian vision of Tokyo overrun with "otherworldly invaders" that have forced mankind underground.

Dark Fujiwara was lead art director on the project. He says his challenge was to create a card game that appeals to the casual Japanese gamer – those less attuned to a "more western style" of artwork.

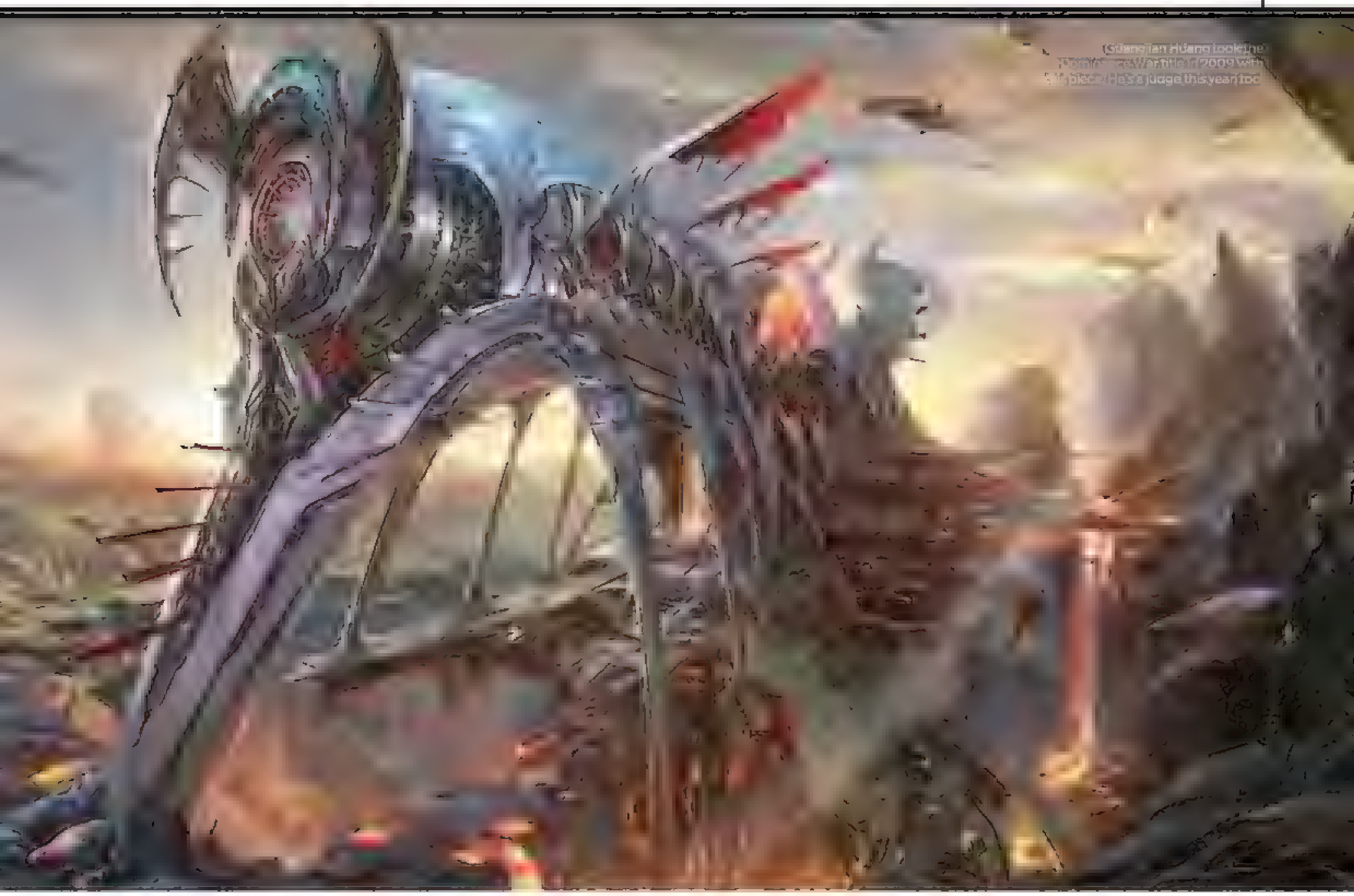
"To appeal to a broader audience of Japanese players," Dark says, "I naturally went for a manga and anime style for the main characters. The same goes for the environments."

The game's a cross between previous releases Legend of the Cryptids and Galaxy Saga, in which players collect cards and take part in real-time battles. The artwork is beautiful throughout, with contributions from Evan Lee, JS Marantz and Brad Rigney.

Chaos Drive is out now on iOS.



Applibot's Chaos Drive has a more [illegible] to appeal to a broader Japanese audience.


Shanglian Huang took the Dominance War title in 2009 with his piece. He's a judge this year, too

Back from the dead

Second coming The rise and fall and rise again of a popular online art competition



When Dominance War came to an unceremonious end, back in 2010, founder Fredrik Hultqvist promised it wasn't the last we'd seen of the annual game art competition. The contest fell foul of increasing running costs and a shortage of staff. Since then, Montreal-based Fredrik has spent his time "redesigning, restructuring and recreating" all challenges hosted by his art forum Game Artisans.

The most recent competition, Unearthly Challenge's an Olympic-like event in which artists are athletes and online communities the countries. I have I learned from the 2010 experience? Fredrik says: "Yes. Absolutely. Unearthly Challenge exists because I truly believe we need an event that celebrates artistic talent, skill and technique. It's that brings artists together for a common cause: to celebrate art and artistic achievement in games."

Several communities are taking part including ZBrushCentral, 3DArtist.ru and CGArtist, competing across four categories: 3D environment art, 3D vehicle art, concept environment art and concept vehicle art. The overall theme is 'extreme environments'.

Putting setbacks behind him, Fredrik is confident about the future of Game Artisans. "I'm saving the best restoration for last," he concludes. "Dominance War will return in 2014."

> **I'm saving the best restoration for last. Dominance War will return in 2014**

Keep a close eye on Fredrik's site at **www.gameartisans.org** for further details.


Overload, painted by Montreal-based environment artist Vlad Dergachov, who was one of 2009's winners

+deviantWATCH

Here are some of the many gems we found on the pages of deviantART. .



Miles Johnston

http://ifxm.ag/m-johnston

Mi es is an artist we're very excited about. Fixat on is just one of many outstanding pieces in his gallery – a treasure trove of weird and wonderfu traditional art, taking in everyth ng from sketchbook WIPs to accomplished o l paintings, a rendered with an eye for the outré. Definitely one to watch



Rob Rey

www.robrey.deviantart.com

Rob is a f ne artist and i lustrator, working primarily in oi paints to produce figure, fantasy, portra.t, sti l life and landscape pieces Merma d l is his take on the mythical creature – an exercise in understatement that's beautifu ly it. Rob's gallery is certainly worthy of your time.



Ninjatic

www.ninjatic.deviantart.com

Substrata was an onl ne project inviting artists to create a dark fantasy video game as they'd like to see it. Subm ssions could be anything from character designs to storyboards. Until Then is Ninjatic's entry. Eerie and enchant ng, it's a homage to the dark fantasy genre without feeling derivative.

I've kept a few pages of the projects I've worked on over the years. In most cases, I like to keep pencil versions, which I'm a great fan of, rather than f nished, inked versions.

I started working on an inclined drawing board early on in my career It enables me to work 10-12 hours a day I can t use a flat surface because it would put too much strain on my back



ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Simone Bianchi

Tuscan talent This Italian comic book illustrator lets us into his studio and explains why he no longer works at night



My studio sits on the first floor of my beloved house in the Tuscan countryside. I live and work among the cornfields – it's the perfect location for peace and inspiration. I did consider moving into a wood, but I'm worried about becoming too isolated.

n the back of the ma n room there's the off ce of our studio manager and my art dealer and s ster G orja Bianchi, and a smaller room for my assistant, Riccardo Pieruccin where my co ection of act on figures is a so ocated. We all work n the same env ronment, but each has a separate area to concentrate and to sten to their preferred k nd of music ike pop rock hard rock and heavy meta , although the genre m into right now s c assic British prog bands such as P nk Floyd King Cr mso

I love getting new brushes, pens and pencils. I have tons of them. I still feel the same childlike joy when I go to the fine art supply shop and lay them out in order on my desk

Music is essential for me to work. I used to play drums – something I really miss nowadays – but I tend to listen to quite an eclectic mix of music.

The large round window gives me a constant view of the cornfields, so during sunny days (like today) it's the perfect location – an ideal natural light to paint in



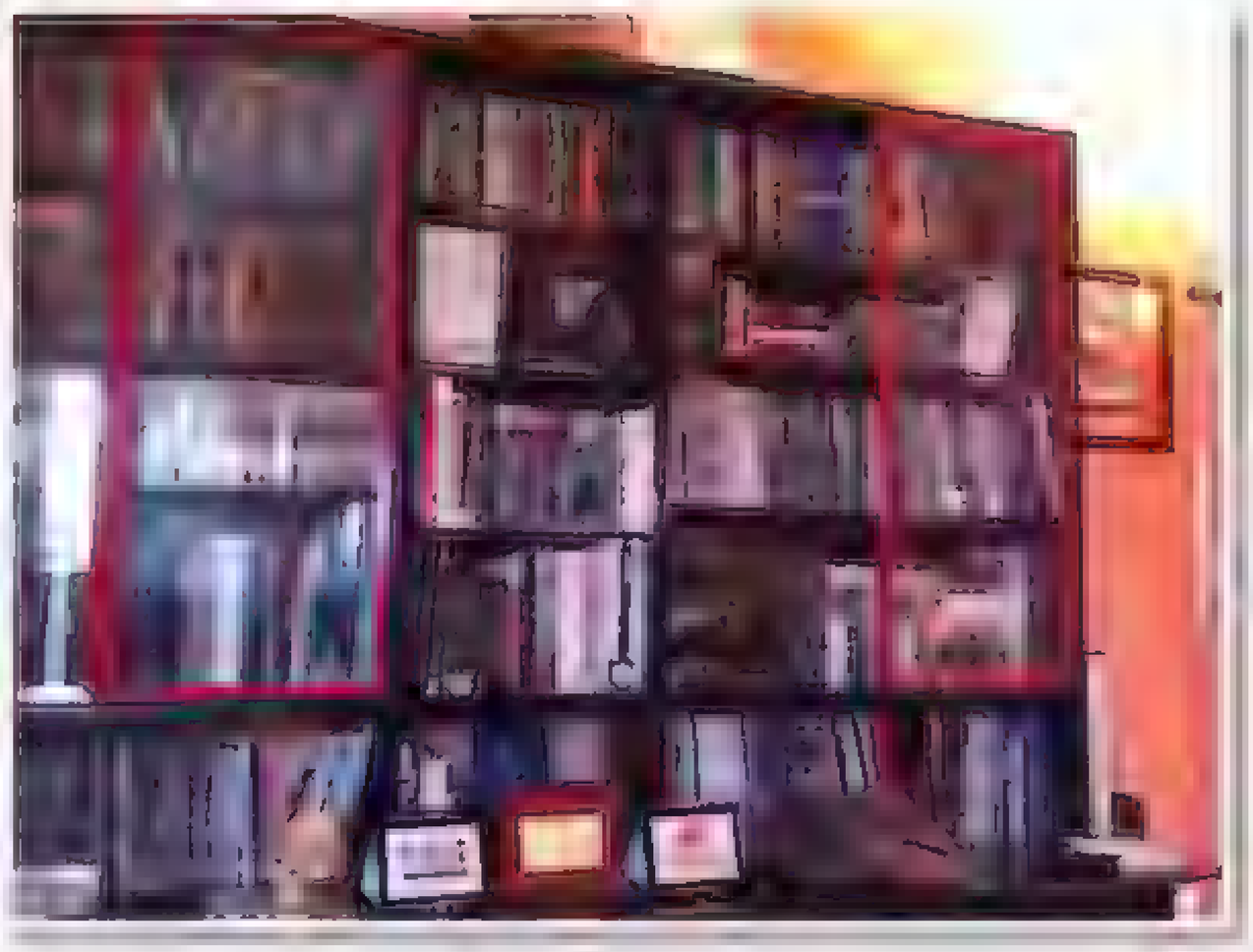
Jethro Tull, Yes, Gentle Giant, Genesis and Peter Gabriel. But occasionally I listen to classical, new age, jazz and prog metal.

For about 15 years I'd begin working after dinner and carry on until morning. It was when I felt most productive. This all changed last year, when my first kid, Sebastian, was born. Unlike most parents, whose work is interrupted by the birth of a child, it's given me extra strength. I'm more motivated to further my career – and to work a more regular and steady daily schedule.

I tend to start drawing in the morning between breakfast and lunch, then get back to work right after lunch and go on through the whole afternoon. At around 7pm, I go to the gym for my daily workout. I've dropped 11kg in weight in the past seven months. Spending all my time drawing at a table seriously affected my physical health.

Simone is a comic book illustrator who's worked on titles such as Batman, Green Lantern and Wolverine. To see examples of his art, head over to www.simonebianchi.com.

When it comes down to colour painting, by far my favourite medium is acrylics, followed by oil pastels and colour pencil. Acrylics are quicker to dry and this to me, makes it a more fluent method to use



On the left-hand side of this mighty bookcase are all the books that I regularly dip into for reference purposes. Over on the right-hand side are all my published books

FRESH PAINT

Your art news that's grabbed our attention



Benjamin Ivey (@iveydesign)

"Still life sketch, an apple study."
http://ifxm.ag/benivey

Tony Eight (@tony_eight)

"Did this bird study a while ago and thought I'd share it with you."
http://ifxm.ag/tonyeight



Nancy Poucher (@NoWallstudio)

"Small study of dunes and moors. Pastel painting. Happy to be out in the dunes."
http://ifxm.ag/nancypoucher

Just finished something you want us to shout about? Send it our way on Twitter (@imaginefx), or find us on Facebook!

Hatboy
by Vaughn Pinpin



Fantasy talk Explaining the inexplicable

"My first major paid commission was for a crazy doctor who wanted to make a book to help him sell his crazy pyramid scheme."

Hence why Justin Gerard was offered payment in "invigorating vitamins". See page 134 for more...

Students get reanimating

Dead ringers When there's no more room in hell, then the living dead shall be digitally painted by art students in Dublin...

Select a famous portrait, any famous portrait, and make the subject look like a zombie. Those were the instructions Declan Finn gave his students at Ballyfermot College of Further Education. Declan is coordinator of the Higher National Diploma in graphic design at the Dublin college, and he set the task to encourage his students to explore digital illustrative techniques.

By making students select a famous painting," Declan says, "and then turn no[illegible] into a zombie version, it required them to mimic a traditional painterly style digitally but also enabled them to be creative and have a little fun."

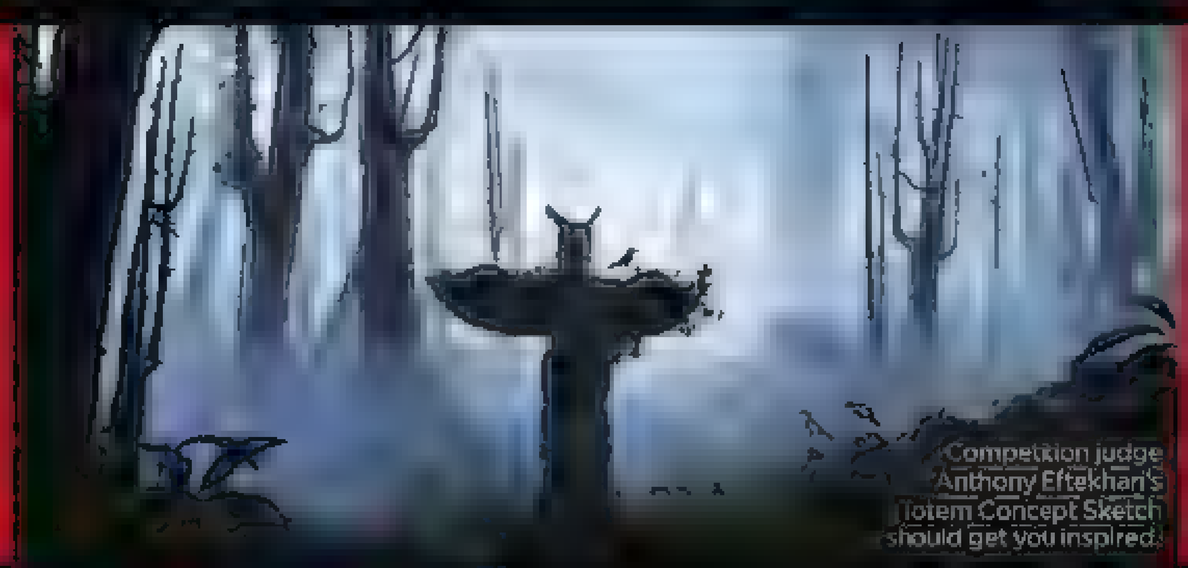
Chris Lawlor chose a self-portrait by French painter Gustave Courbet, who tells us "quite animated" pose lent itself to the zombie theme (far right). Howard Burr reworked a self-portrait by another French artist Joseph Ducreux, adding elements from meat bones and surgical procedures."



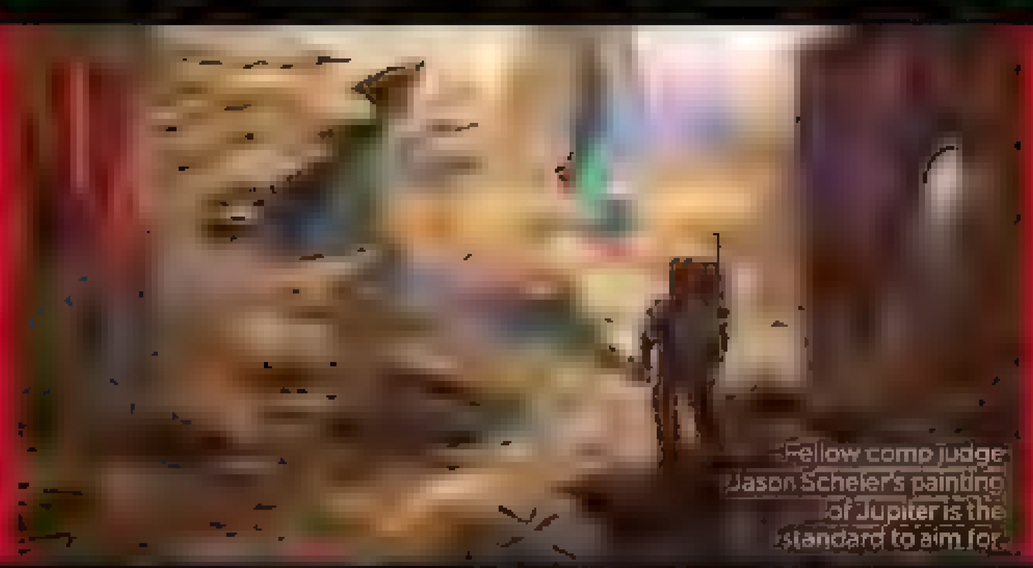
Jason Ryan brought Oliver Cromwell back to life, while Chris Lawlor zombiefied Gustave Courbet's striking self-portrait.

It wasn't too much of a stretch for Jason Ryan to turn Samuel Cooper's portrait of Oliver Cromwell into a soulless killer (left). And Ludmila Varonik chose Portrait of a Gentleman by Charles Stoppelaer, its air of "dignity and self-confidence" making a "good juxtaposition with the zombie theme."





Competition judge Anthony Eftekhari's Totem Concept Sketch should get you inspired.



Fellow comp judge Jason Scheler's painting of Jupiter is the standard to aim for.

Win! Classes at CGMA and Amazon gift cards!

Competition Submit your visions of an alien world to digital art tutors CGMA, and be in with the chance of winning online workshops plus $800-worth of Amazon gift cards

Online art school Computer Graphics Master Academy (CGMA) has come up with a competition giving artists of any standing the opportunity to showcase their work to a global audience, as well as sharpen their skills with art classes from industry experts and even pocket up to $500 to spend at Amazon.

For this challenge, CGMA wants you to create a captivating, realistic and believable alien world in a single image. You can pick any time and place for this exposition. Whether it's a thriving civilisation or a distant world long since forgotten, your job is to give CGMA a glimpse into what such a place would be like.

Your final work will be judged on both the strange familiarity it invokes in the viewer, and the underlying narrative it communicates about this far-flung place. Your goal is simply to create a world that could exist out there somewhere.

COMPETITION DETAILS

All you need to do to be in with a chance of winning is create your best alien world painting as described above – it can be digital or traditional – and submit it to our friends at CGMA no later than Wednesday 11 December 2013.

GRAND PRIZES

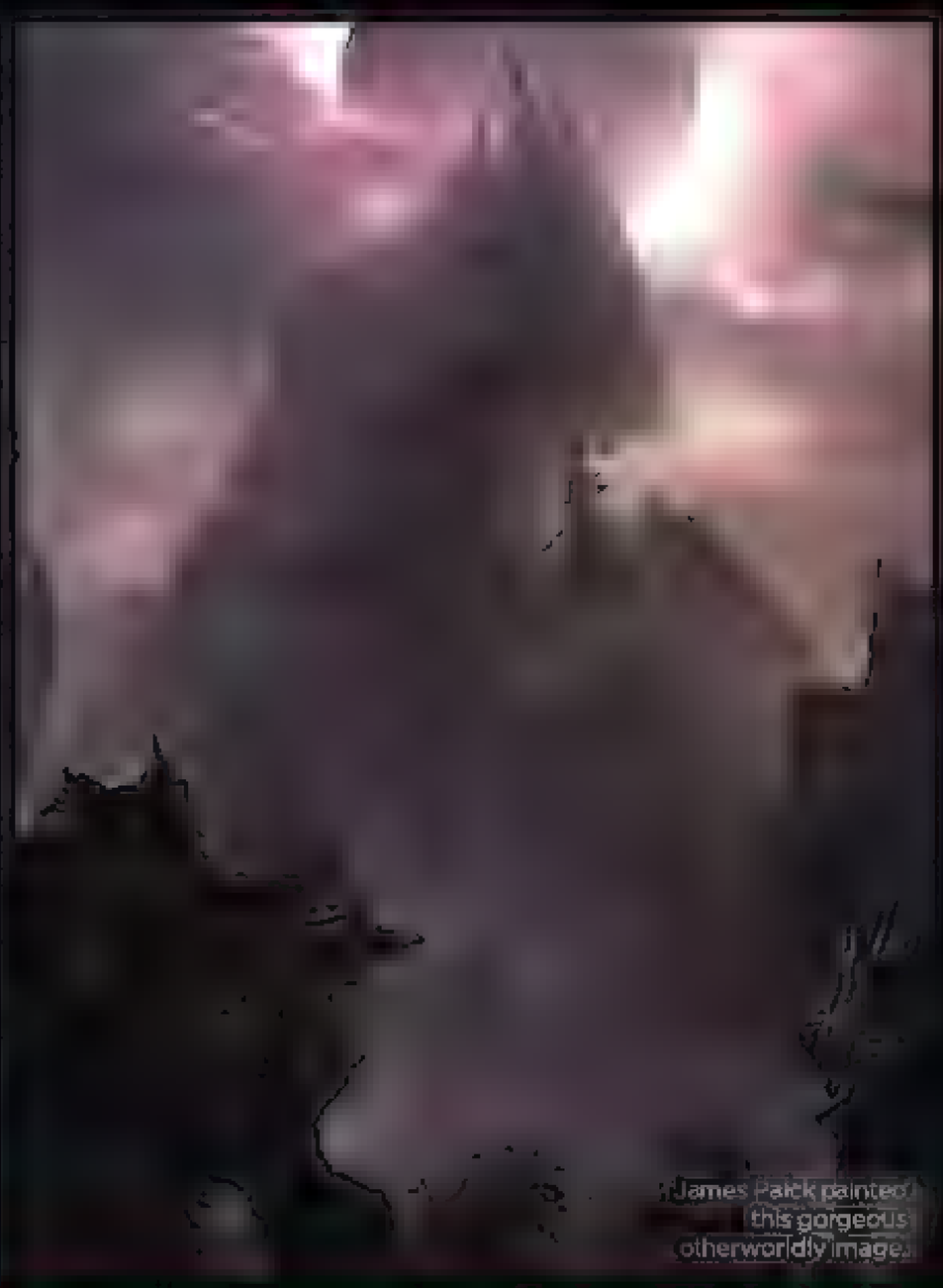
- First place winner: CGMA class with $500 Amazon gift card. Artwork and interview featured on CGMA's website.
- Second place winner: CGMA class with $200 Amazon gift card. Artwork and interview featured on CGMA's website.
- Third place winner: CGMA 12 workshops (six-month subscription). $100 Amazon gift card. Artwork and interview featured in CGMA's website.

HOW TO ENTER

Submit your alien world artwork online to CGMA at **http://ifxm.ag/alien-world** by **midnight Wednesday 31 December (GMT).** Good luck!

ABOUT CGMA

Los Angeles-based CGMA is a leading provider of online digital art, entertainment [illegible] take a good look at what it offers at **www.2d.cgmasteracademy.com**). Through its range of CG Master Classes – and the inexpensive Master Workshops series – the organisation provides comprehensive art courses in everything from figure drawing to colour and light, and led by some of the biggest names from the world of art.



James Paick painted this gorgeous otherworldly image.

MEET THE JUDGES



Anthony Eftekhari



James Paick



Jason Scheler

The competition judges will be Anthony Eftekhari, James Paick and Jason Scheler.

Anthony has worked in TV, film and games, creating artwork and matte paintings for Blizzard Entertainment, including for World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria, Diablo III and StarCraft II: Heart of the Swarm.

Guild Wars 2, Uncharted 2 and Rise of the Argonauts are some of the projects James has worked on. The freelance concept artist has a long client list that includes Naughty Dog, NCsoft and EA.

Visual artist and concept designer Jason counts NBC, Universal and Honda among his clients. He's a visual development artist at DreamWorks Animation SKG, where he's currently working on a feature film.

FANTASY SCI FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX Forum

Winners

Image of the month

ntrol With the technology to travel the cosmos, you'd think alien life forms could fake a decent passport. Not so, according to Gareth Davies



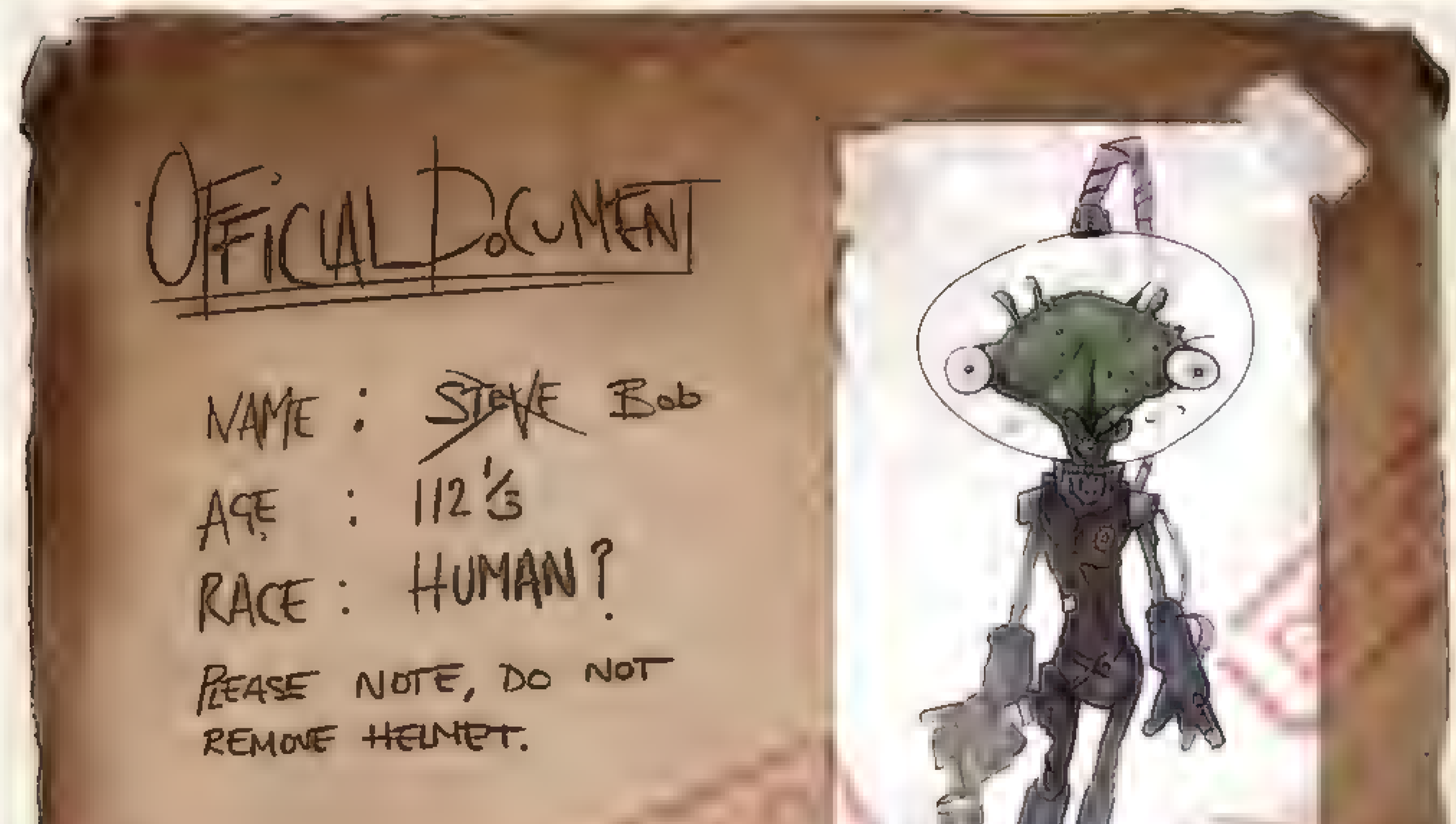
Congratulations Gareth – you've won two ImagineFX specials of your choice! To get your hands on similar prizes, see our Forum challenges at http://community.imaginefx.com/forums

It may be an expert in space travel, but Gareth Davies's alien is a novice when it comes to counterfeiting. The self-taught artist came out on top of a forum challenge to create an intergalactic passport for an alien species.

Gareth's w nn ng entry demonstrates a flair for character design He came up w th a rak sh gun- singing creature, who's also an ncompetent forger, as the mu tip e 'Den ed' stamps on h s passport prove "These cha enges are great. They make you th nk and test yourse f with a realistic brief something you wouldn t ordinar y do As someone who's still earning the ImagineFX forum challenges are great practice

Gareth recently grad.ated n arch tecture from the Jn versity of Bath, Eng and and is c.rrent y look ng for work as a concept artist

Intergalactic Passport
Gareth Davies (Spudonkey)
http://ifxm.ag/spudonkey
http://ifxm.ag/intergalacticpassport





Gareth's initial concepts featured criminally minded water-breathers – hence the oversized helmets



"The rough paper, the handwritten notes and comic details make all the difference. It's like something from Men in Black!" Nuno Pinto (nuno_fpint

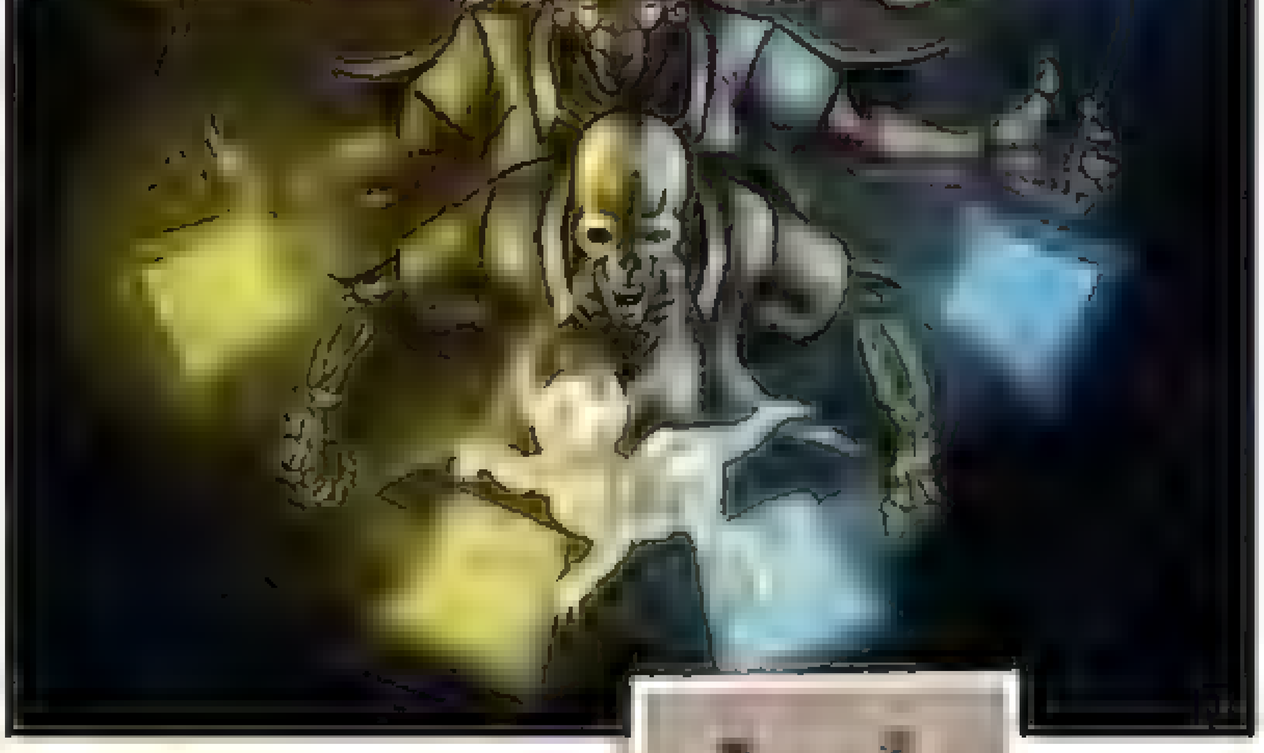
Join in!
www.imaginefx.com/forums



Pandemonium
Tyl Destoop (Tyl)
http://ifxm.ag/tyldestoop
http://ifxm.ag/pandemoniumchallenge



"Each ImagineFX challenge is an opportunity to gain knowledge about composition, colour use and painting techniques. It's an ideal way to improve my skills and get some feedback from other artists. My inspirations are Hal Foster and Frank Frazetta. Prince Valliant's battle scenes have been imprinted in my brain since I was eight years old. Later, I discovered the great Frazetta. I drew Pandemonium first on paper and then painted it in Photoshop. It turned out pretty close to how I imagined, and is representative of my painting skills at the moment."



Tyl's starting point for this Forum challenge was to depict "a chaotic mech fight". On advice from his fellow artists, he added some cooler colours to make the lead robot stand out from the crowd.



21st Century Warlock
Daniel Johnson (Squaredmotion)
http://ifxm.ag/squaredmotion
http://ifxm.ag/21stcwarlock



"My biggest concern going into this challenge was making sure my 21st Century Warlock's ritual wasn't just random magic. I wanted to give it a story. So, I started with a sketch of a businessman with a loose shirt, which gave him a 'Miami chic' look. I started thinking about what type of warlock might live in Florida in the 21st century. That led me to look into Haitian culture, and I was inspired to create a kind of voodoo witch doctor. He's breaking the oath of his order by seeking immortality through usurping the body of an infant. All in all, I think the story of the image comes through strongly. If I had a bit more time, I would have wanted to add details that pushed him further into the 21st century."



Pictured left are some of the silhouette studies that Daniel produced during the early stages of the painting process

StoreMags.com

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, Claire Howlett, on claire@imaginefx.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK

Follow us on twitter: www.twitter.com/imaginefx

Tell us your thoughts on: www.facebook.com/imaginefx



Our core skills compendium is still available to buy at http://beta.imaginefx.com/shop.

The disc

I've just received issue 102 and noticed the disc isn't included. The digital contents are available on the website, but to get all the conten s I'll have to download 20 or so files. I'm not happy. While I understand the cost saving, this adds labour to the reader's side The least you can do is also provide a compressed file that includes the issue's digital contents, or an .ISO file, for easy backup. This way, those like me can get all the content with the press of a button

Defan, via email

Claire replies Hello Defan. Thanks for emailing in. The reason each resource is provided separately is so readers can choose what they need and download accordingly All of the resources would be over 2.5GB, which would take too long to download Also, we don't want to compress the f les as this affects the quality of the files. Without the disc, we've tried to provide the resources in the easiest way possible, but I'm all ears for how we can make this process better.



See page 97 for details on how to get hold of a copy.

Art outrage

Having Painter X, Photoshop 7 and the starter version of ArtRage, I bought your Digital Artists Survival Guide. But your articles are based on the latest editions of these programs, so it's no use to me. I'm a pensioner without the internet and so unable to obtain free trial discs, and I can't afford to update the first two programs ArtRage and Twisted Brush can't be bought on disc. I'm so frustrated that I can't even get the programs I can afford

R Clifton, England

Claire replies Sorry to hear your troubles with our special edition. Admittedly, some instructions are for the latest iterations, but a lot of information within those pages is relevant to older versions, and most of the art advice applies to all software.

Issue 102 – your feedback

Good to see you are moving away from opt ca med a
Josh Bailey, via Facebook

Fantast c issJe don t need to connect my DVD drive to ook at f es anymore (woot) Love the Fantasy Illustrator pages and the "make dig tal look traditional" workshop is out of th s world
Gudre Olsauskaite, via Facebook

Some great tutorials and rea y ke the Keith Thompson section
Shaun Slade Concept Development, Facebook

Loving the section on tradi onal art! The artwork is beaut ful
@lugaduck002

Loving that @ maginefx has a trad section now!
@AnneWassell

Love the new beaut ful cover @I v ngrope Stunn ng work !
@Afyfanwyart

I love the new trad tiona sect on great art st showcase
@rphallett

@ maginefx cover art sure is pretty
@DanRobson

Such a beaut fu cover and such an nterest ng ssue The change from CD to down oad s gen us and the new trad tiona feature is ong overdue
Dontopia, via the Forum

A love y cover and trad tiona sect on Yet I m disappo nted. Last month whinged about how some of the content was not on the d sc And now , AL of the content s not on the d sc! Oh we l
Valence, via the Forum

The cover s awesome But does anyone else get an urge to sing Lady Gaga when they ook at t, or is t just me? (Probab y me.)
Blue, via the Forum



Our star letter writer wins a dA Premium Membership!

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Inspiring sketches

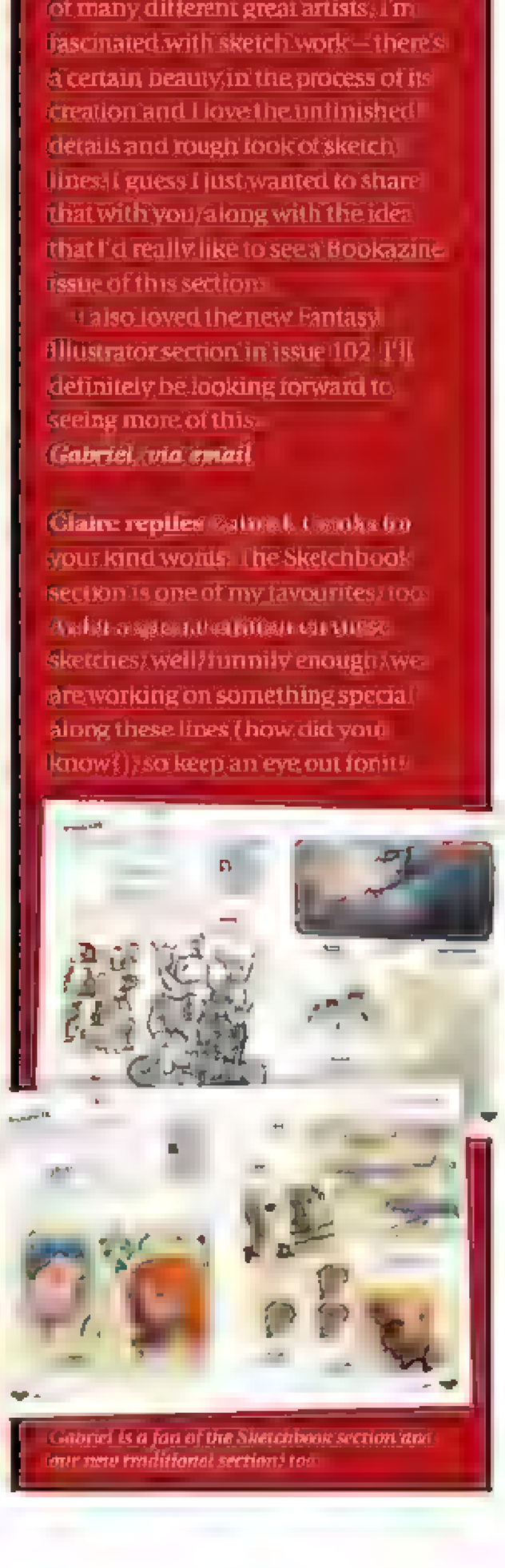
Last time I wrote to you was back in November 2010. Since then I've continued to read your magazine adoring the vast collection of art and [illegible]

I'm writing to you to talk about one of my favourite sections of your magazine: the Sketchbook section, which features the artwork of many different great artists. I'm fascinated with sketch work – there's a certain beauty in the process of its creation and I love the unfinished details and rough look of sketch lines. I guess I just wanted to share that with you along with the idea that I'd really like to see a Bookazine issue of this section.

I also loved the new Fantasy Illustrator section in issue 102. I'll definitely be looking forward to seeing more of this.

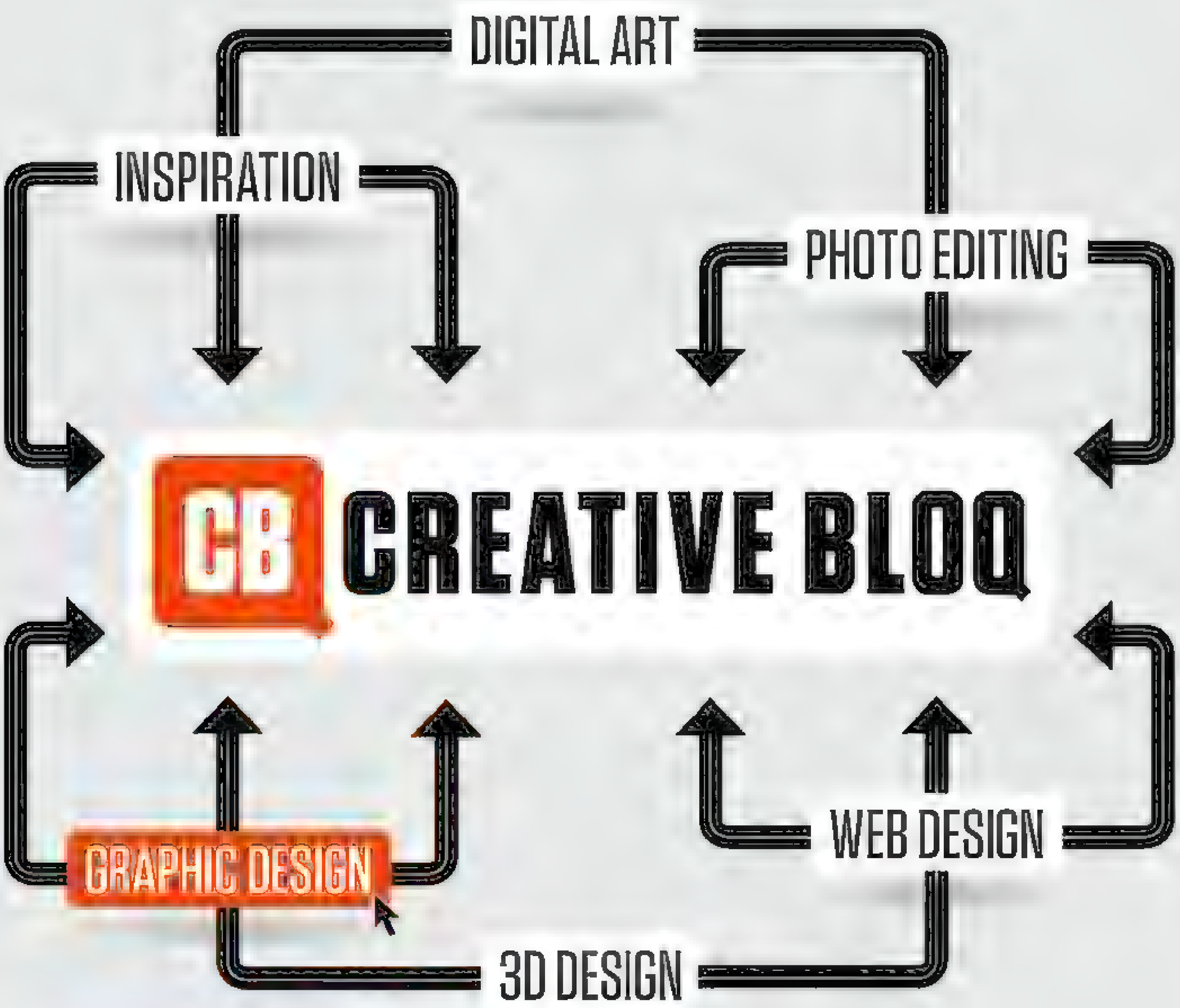
Gabriel, via email

Claire replies Gabriel, thanks for your kind words. The Sketchbook section is one of my favourites, too. And as for a Bookazine on sketches, well, funnily enough, we are working on something special along these lines (how did you know?), so keep an eye out for it!



Gabriel is a fan of the Sketchbook section and [illegible] traditional section] too.

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Artist Q&A

GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR EXPERTS? LET US EASE YOUR ART-ACHE AT **HELP@IMAGINEFX.COM**

The ImagineFX panel

Paco Rico Torres



Paco is a freelance illustrator living in Spain who's produced art for several card games, magazines, books and role-playing games.

www.paconico.blogspot.com

Tony Foti



Tony is a U.S. freelance illustrator who contributes to D&D and Fantasy Flight Games' Star Wars and The Lord of the Rings lines.

www.tonyfotiart.com

Mark Molnar



Mark works as a concept and visual development artist for the entertainment industry. He also freelances for film, game and animation companies.

www.markmolnar.com

Jake Murray



Jake works in the publishing world creating freelance art, creating art for sci-fi and fantasy book covers, table-top games and advertising.

www.murr-art.com

John Staub



John is an illustrator and concept designer based in the Bay Area who is currently specialising in the games and publications field.

www.dustsplat.blogspot.com

Don Seegmiller



Artist, author and instructor, Don teaches in the Art and Visual Communication Department at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah.

www.seegmillerart.com

Corrado Vanelli



Corrado works full time in a factory and only paints in his free time. He's worked with digital media since the 1990s. Art for Corrado is a passion.

www.landofsecretarts.com

Question

Can you help me paint an ornate design on a shiny metal surface?

Gaye Arthurs, New Zealand

Answer

John replies



Painting ornate designs on a surface can be made easier if you treat it as a separate element to the surface it's going to be on. Before I try and tackle the ornate designs on the armour I try to make sure that the armour is already complete and painted to a fairly finished degree. Only then will I begin painting the ornate designs on top.

The trick to achieving the effect of shiny metal for me is contrast. Creating strong value contrast in the overall form of the armour will help really sell it. Another key thing to remember is that shiny armour is very reflective and will reflect the objects and colours that are around it, like a mirror. The shinier the metal, the stronger and clearer the reflection of the object will be.

When the armour is finished, I then paint the actual armour design on a separate layer on top. I want the armour to tell the story not the person wearing it, so the decoration design suggests a knight with a high rank as well as an emblem type design to suggest a clan or kingdom he's sworn allegiance to. To give the effect of brass I include a lot of cool blueish hues.



Artist's secret

REFLECTING THE SURROUNDINGS



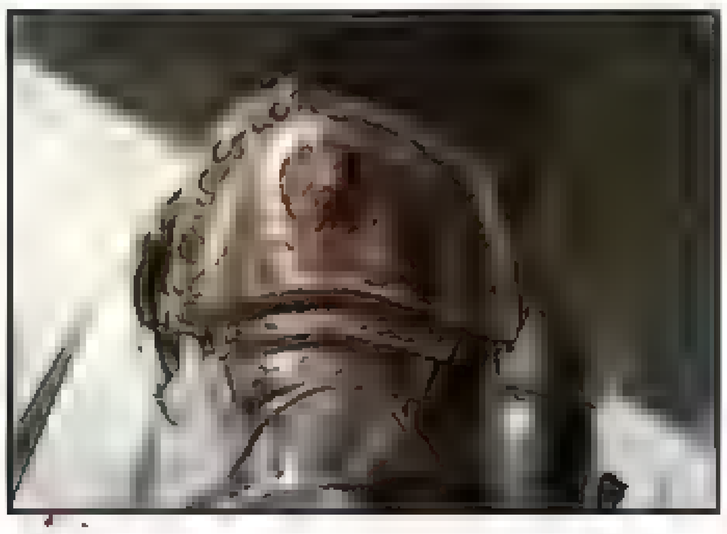
Step-by-step:
Forge a decorative suit of armour



1 I begin with a quick line drawing of the image. The drawing itself I would consider fairly tight – try to make sure the basic design of the armour is already clear, as well as all the proportions all properly measured and adjusted accordingly so that I avoid fixing and making changes later on when I begin the painting.



2 I paint and render the basic design of the armour. The decorations are like the icing on the cake. Before placing it on I ensure that the base and foundation for these decorations are clearly established. I wanted a moody, sombre tone to this image, resulting in a more cooler muted colour scheme and lighting choice.



3 Once the armour base has been fully painted in I then begin sketching in and rendering the decorations on the armour. The bronze decorations, which is a warm metallic colour, introduces a pleasing contrast to the scene and complements the overall cool tone of armour and image in general.

Question
How would you go about depicting a steampunk-themed workspace

Bradley Hughes, England



Answer
Jake replies



There are a couple of principles you can use to your advantage when creating an image of a steampunk environment like this. The first to keep in mind is grouping. Even though we want to paint a space that's relatively cluttered, that doesn't mean we should just put objects all over the place. As artists we have to do our best to control the chaos so that the image conveys a sense of clutter, but is still visually pleasing. By combining the mess into grouped clusters you create different areas of visual activation and rest within your image, and enable the viewer's eye to travel more easily through the messy room.

In order to keep the piece from becoming too dark and dingy, try combining large windows (or in this case a garage door) with interior lighting. For this image I've gone with a cool indirect window light combined with a weaker warm lamplight coming from the left and elsewhere off-canvas.

Having these two light sources does a couple of things for the image. It creates an interesting balance of warm and cool colours, and it keeps the shadows being cast by the window from being too dark and harsh. You could even add more lamps into the composition if you wanted to further brighten up the room.



Artist's secret
SIMPLIFY YOUR MESS!



Question
How can I realistically depict fire in my artwork?
Anthony Evans, Wales



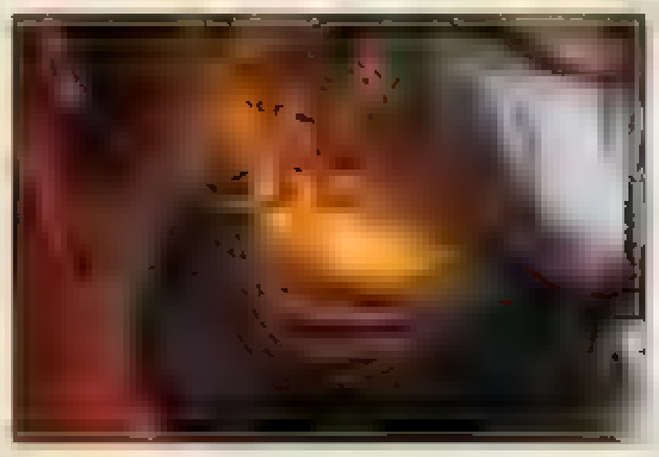
Don't forget to introduce dynamism into a fire-based scene by painting flying embers and smoke particles, to push the idea of a fierce flame

Answer
Mark replies



To add realistic fire to my image I create a painted base that roughly resembles the colour and shape of the flame I have in mind. After this first Normal layer, I start to add multiple photographs of fire. For light-based effects I always use the Screen layer option, because it cuts out the dark parts of the image. In addition, Overlay and Soft Light layers placed on top of my painted base give the image more variation. During this process I change the value range of the effect layers with Levels and transform them to the shape I need with the Warp Tool.

I try to re-create the parts of the fire separately with photo textures and painted elements. The core of the fire, the flames, the smoke and the small flying embers can add extra dynamism. Try to be creative with your photo textures. For example, in this piece I use multiple inverted photos of ink clouds dissolving in water to give the background flames a magical look. Note that when applying photo textures, you shouldn't allow these images to be in control. Shape all the textures as necessary and composite multiple reference images together to achieve the exact look you're after.



With any surface that is reflective the photo texture is going to show up in the highlights and transitions from light to shadow

Question
Please help me show motion in a line sketch
Nathaniel Haywood, US



In this image are two sketch examples of a dog wagging its tail and a woman waving her arms. Both show the principles talk about

Answer
John replies



One solution to convey motion in a line drawing is to approach it like an animation. I would draw the hand or tail during the beginning of the motion, the height or middle of the motion as an in-between, and at the end of the motion. It's crucial to draw one of these more boldly than the other two to suggest that it's the real one and the other two drawings are after-shadows from the movement.

To further support the illusion of movement in the line drawing I added a couple of lines that show the direction of the movement. Because wagging tails and waving arms are a looping movement, I place the movement lines on the side or on top to show that the object is going back and forth. If I were to place the line directly behind or in front of the arm or tail, then it would look like it's only going in one direction.



This is another example of a dog wagging its tail. The long fur on the tail also suggests the direction that the tail is going.

Question
I'd like to know how to paint a hairy, tattooed arm of an old barbarian
Gibblit King, US

Answer
Paco replies



I would start by suggesting that you should consider these three things separately. First of all, let's take the weathered skin. That is a simple matter of observation. When skin ages it loses its flexibility, which results in body elements under the skin, such as veins, become more visible. Furthermore, there are more wrinkles (mainly around the areas of the body where there's articulation, or on the face due to a lifetime of facial expressions), more skin spots and imperfections. Just bear that in mind when painting the skin. You can go big on textures and visual noise to avoid an unwanted smooth look.

Now on to the hair. Body hair can be simplified as a dark layer over the skin, which creates a kind of contour around the body. You don't need to paint individual hairs – just apply a slightly dark layer over the skin and add some brush strokes that suggest the direction of the hair.

And finally, the tattoos. Those are the easiest to do. Simply make the tattoos follow the volume of the body, and don't paint them too dark or saturated, because over time black tattoos become greenish grey.

Question
How do I recreate the look of parchment?
Juan O'Hanrahan, Spain

Answer
Tony replies



You can easily recreate the effect of an aged, tea-stained parchment without getting anything wet or travelling back in time. First though, we're going to need some line art, and I've chosen to depict a Chinese dragon. Overlapping its body in some areas can be a good way to push the depth.

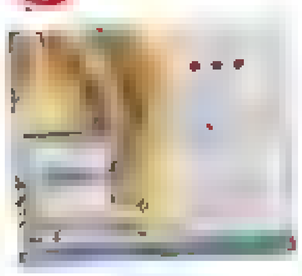
For the aged parchment effects, I work with photo textures and overlay layers. You can collect pictures of old paper, coffee rings, tea stains, and anything else you think might emulate the antiquing effect. Once you've collected enough to feel ready, create a PSD and fill the background layer with a dull yellow (or whatever colour you want the paper to be). With that placed at the bottom, drag and drop the images into Photoshop. Change the layer type from Normal to Overlay for each texture. Adjust the Opacity to make it more or less visible. In addition to changing the Opacity, playing around with the sliders in the levels window can emphasise or mute the intensity of your overlay texture.

With the paper feeling right, it's time to scan in that dragon. Either move the imported image (paper and all) under your texture layers, or separate the lines and place it on top (see my other Q&A article from this issue). Either way, your new drawing should now look sufficiently ancient.



The line-art style of this classic fantasy creature works well with the aged look of the parchment

Artist's secret



RECREATING INK STAINS

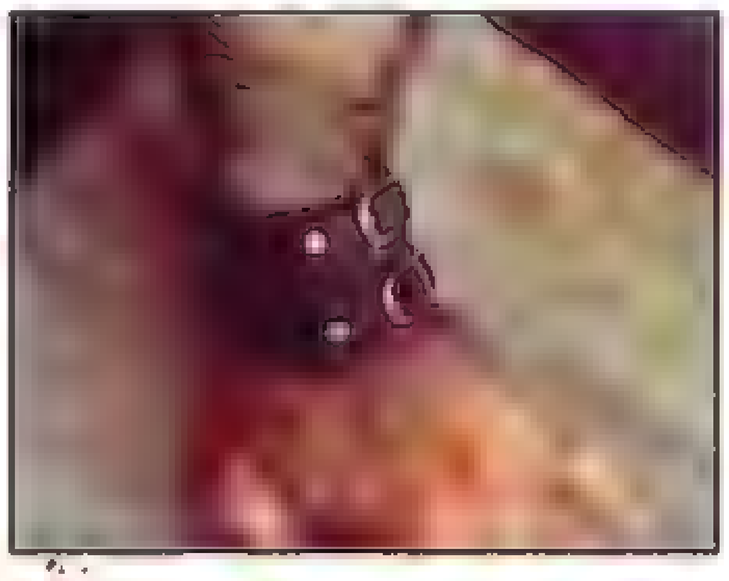
Step-by-step: Depict a hairy, tattooed arm



1 I paint the skin, trying to emphasise the veins, the shape of the bones and skin imperfections (the skin spots are on a separate Multiply layer, which is convenient for painting the hair later on). There isn't too much detail on the arm because it's going to be covered with hair.



2 Then I start to depict the hair, which involves me painting a greyish tone over the arm, and some brushstrokes to create the visual effect of hair pointing in one direction. Then I paint the hair outline on the arm and hand, and introduce some extra hair with thin brush strokes.



3 I add the tattoos on a Multiply layer over the hair, and paint over them using further layers to integrate them better with the skin (some extra hair, some extra lights, for instance). Finally, I mix some textures and paste them over the image on a low Opacity Overlay layer.

Question
Can you help me paint a doomed planet, as seen from space?
Fire Breathing Talent Tiger, US

Answer
Mark replies



For this image I want to show the results of excess global development, with a planet covered with smog from the factories of its countless cities. Then the idea of an invasion from space springs to mind. Yet instead of showing the actual attack I decide to depict the moment when the invaders arrive, just before they start to wipe out the planet's inhabitants.

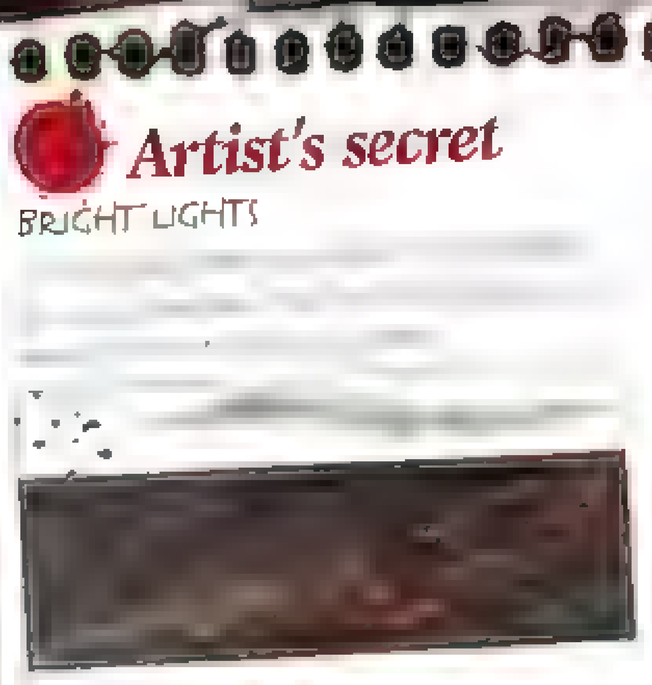
Because nature's forms and tones are always harmonious, the best way to indicate chaos is through colours and disorganised, abstract shapes. To strengthen the feel of aggression I want to apply more red to the lights of the planet, implying the presence of either fire or lava. I also want to add a chaotic structure to the cities, so I imagine that the planet's giant urban areas have, over time, expanded until they've merged into each other

I paint a thick cloud cover to support my original idea of global environmental catastrophe, which also helps to add more depth. It can be useful to imagine the planet's surface and the clouds as parallel layers. First I paint the clouds by leaving dark patches through which I can see the planet's surface, and then add the lights of the cities to these dark spots on a Color Dodge layer. This instantly created four levels on the planet: the surface; the cities, the overall dark, but slightly lit underside of the clouds, and the very top level of the cloud cover that's hit by the sunlight. In the following steps I simply have to detail these main areas further and carefully work out how they their transition into each other properly



To make matters worse alien invaders suddenly appear in orbit around a planet that's already in deep trouble

Artist's secret



Step-by-step: Depict a ruined planet under attack



1 It's good to add some movement to the background of your space scenes, so I paint some nebulas and add the stars using custom brushes with high Scattering values. Try to avoid using a plain black background because it can easily flatten out your artwork. I also block in the sun into the upper left corner to establish the lighting scheme of the scene



2 I paint the scene's three key elements: the planet, moon and main spaceship. It's important to create a rhythm with your main objects, so the planet, moon and ships move from large, to medium and to small. This helps the viewer to understand the relative sizes and strengthens the depth of your image. Concentrate on silhouettes and only block in the main lights and shadows



3 I try to clearly define all my major elements through their material make-up, by painting them differently and creating extra levels inside them, such as the planet's surface and the cracks of the moon. You can make objects in a composition look more interesting if you break them down into smaller, standalone elements, rather than detail out the primary structure



4 I add some photo textures to the key elements to give them more visual noise and then paint on top to unify the look of the image. I push the drama and lighting to achieve a space opera look, and paint the other smaller ships. I like to fine-tune the story elements at the end of the process because at this point all the artistic and technical problems have been solved

Question
Can you help me show blood dispersing in water?
Bonnie Crossman, England



Answer
Don replies



To answer this question I paint blood from a wound semi-realistically in still water. The background, the school of piranha, the victim fish, and the main piranha are all placed on their own layers.

I start by cutting the victim fish into two pieces, with each piece on a different layer. Each of the following steps are specific to this painting and should be adapted to your own the specific goals. First, I paint the blood using the airbrush variants available in Corel Painter X3, using a variety of reds at about half-full intensity. I then gradually increase the stroke width of the blood depending on how far it is from the wound. I place increasingly larger strokes on new layers, and then I push and pull these strokes into more organic shapes using the FX/Turbulence brush. The FX/Smeary Bristle brush helps me to diffuse the blood further into the background. I then reduce the opacity of each layer the further it is from the wound.

Next, I create a large circular selection on a top layer and fill it with red. I then blur the resulting red circle, reduce its transparency, change its Composite Method to Color and place it over the furthest blood layer as the most diffuse blood layer. Finally, I selectively erase some of each layer, which increases the organic look of the diffusing blood.



Artist's secret
INTRODUCE A RANDOM SIDE TO YOUR ART

Question
Please advise me how to depict three distinct textures in a sketch
Jesus Bentov, Spain

Answer
Jake replies



Once I've got all of the larger forms in a composition established with light and shadow, adding texture is as simple as just using smaller brushes and varied strokes to modify the transitional areas of those forms (the area where texture is most apparent).

You could also apply texture as a Multiply layer over the top of your value painting, but be careful not to apply it as much (or at all) in your shadow areas. Texture is only visible because of the way light rakes across it, and so shadows areas should have almost no visible texture unless there's a secondary reflected light source. Keep in mind that texture should change throughout a piece. For example, grass in the foreground isn't the same texture as grass in the background and they should not be painted the same way.



Start with a simple greyscale tonal plan showing basic light and shadow. This will ensure all of your larger forms are correct before you add texture details.

Question
How can I create a transparent copy of a paper sketch to paint under?
Kipper Daily, US

Answer
Tony replies



I find my line work is a lot cleaner when I'm using a pencil and paper, so I work this way quite often. Place a loose piece of paper under your drawing hand to prevent smudging the page. Once the drawing is finished, you can either import it with a scanner or take a photograph. The latter option generally produces less-satisfactory results, although I'm aware that not everyone has access to a scanner.

Open the Channels window, hold Ctrl and click the RGB layer. This will highlight all of the white space. Inverting the selection will highlight the drawing. Create a new layer above and fill the highlighted area (Shift+Backspace). You now have a transparent version of drawing, with all of the white space removed.



With the scanned image imported in Photoshop (File>Import>Your Device), adjust the level sliders until only the lines you want are left.



Adjust the opacity of the sketch as you go, to accommodate the area that you're working on.

Question
Could you help me paint a rainy, night-time scene?
DigitalDeviant, England

Answer
Don replies



Such a scene is all about the ripples and reflections. I paint the image in Corel Painter, working on individual layers. I create a stormy sky using the Airbrush tool on a background layer. When painting the sky I make the clouds that are closer to the horizon thinner, ensuring they have the correct perspective. I overlay the clouds with a gradient layer to make the colour consistent with a dark and stormy night.

Next, I create the reflections of the buildings by duplicating the building layer, flipping it vertically, and moving it behind the buildings layer. I apply some blur and lower the Opacity because reflections aren't as clear or strong as the object that's being reflected. I then apply a slight glass distortion effect to the reflection.

I want some raindrop ripples in the reflection to show that it's raining. On a layer above the reflections I paint different-sized circles using a custom brush made from an outlined circle. I transform this layer so the circles are ellipses. I lock the Layer's Transparency and paint the ripples a rainy colour, then blur and lower their Opacity. On a top layer I paint raindrops using the Small Splattery Airbrush. I change the layer's composite method to Screen and lower its Opacity, before duplicating the layer several times. I add varying amounts of motion blur to the layers, which gives direction to the falling rain.



This final painting shows how the four layers – reflections, clouds, ripples and rain – are combined to create a dark and stormy night.



This is my initial painting of the town that will soon be rain-soaked. To save time I start with a dark, bluish coloured image.

Question
Gruesome battle wounds – where do I start?
Kathleen Tyler, US



Before painting, I spend some time viewing photos of real wounds, so that I'm able to paint the details realistically. A strong stomach is required.

Answer
Paco replies

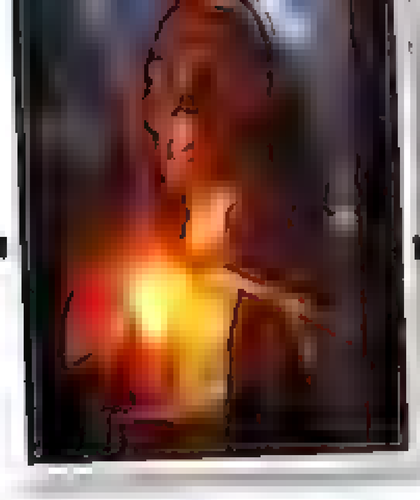


First of all, consider your colours. If you really want to make the wounds stand out, you should use the colour as an accent. Red is the colour of blood and pain, but also is a striking colour choice that can be used to enhance the intensity of whatever you're trying to paint. The problem is that if you use too much red on the rest of the image, or apply colours that are too saturated, the red of the blood is going to lose its visual strength. The solution is to use desaturated colours for the rest of the image, and limit the intense ones for the injuries.

In addition, try to achieve a gruesome texture. Think of ground beef with strawberry syrup. A natural look is important, so don't paint clean-edged wounds. Portray splintered bones leaking bone marrow, torn pieces of flesh and skin hanging loose. If you're in doubt, search for photo references – although this might put some people off the topic completely!



I achieve the gruesome texture by using small brushstrokes of different hues of red, but you can also produce a similar effect by mixing photo textures.



Next month

ON SALE: **6 December**

Show a flame lighting up a dark environment

Question

When painting a surrealist image, what are the key elements to bear in mind?

Muhammad Lloyd, Wales

Answer

Corrado replies



It may sound strange, but the best surrealistic images are interesting simply because they are strange! The aim of surrealism is to represent the metaphysical world of dreams where everything and anything is possible. It's an approach used by writers and painters to associate subjects without an apparent reason

So my suggestion is to choose two or more objects that are different and totally disconnected. After that you have to find a way to combine together these objects in a strange and interesting way. You have to create in the mind of the observer one simple question: why? Why is a woman's face, an apple and a pigeon in the same image? Maybe there's a reason or not, in a surrealist illustration this is always a secondary aspect. You have to shake the mind of your observers and show them something that's irrational and dreamlike. Key points are "no conventions" and "no logical schemes" – only freedom, madness and irrationality will work.

I create a quick illustration in Corel Painter to give an example of modern surrealistic painting. It's very simple, but gives you an idea of what's possible (hint: anything!). In addition, a simple subject can be more interesting than a complex, busy illustration. Of course, your starting point must be the study of great masters like Dalì, Magritte or an amazing metaphysical artist like De Chirico. This can help you to find your way



Here's the finished image, in which I've added a lot of details to increase its visual impact. I've also worked on the indirect lighting, simulated the ambient occlusion and increased the contrast of several shadow areas



Artist's secret

REALISM IS THE SECRET OF SURREALISM

Step-by-step: Portray a character in a surreal composition

1. To create the first sketch, use only two layers, for the background and foreground. The starting point is a simple sketch in which I define the main shapes and colours of the various elements. The image is rough and is created using quick brush strokes. In this first step, I've not defined all the elements of the final image – only the main features



2. Now, smooth parts of the woman's face, using Painter's Smudge and Soft Blender Stump tools, which enable me to blend colours easily. Colour variations are key for the realistic shading of human skin. My workflow for every painting I do consists of a progressive process in which I gradually increase the quality and complexity of the composition



3. I move on to the lighting, which is another fundamental element. It's important to define the direction of the main light source and create shading that matches it. Consider the location of your secondary light sources. In this case I've simulated soft lighting, I have also changed the colour palette of the skin, adding more green and grey nuances



Got a digital art problem? Is an image giving you art-ache? Our panel can help. Email your question to our experts at **help@imaginefx.com** or write to **Artist Q&A, ImagineFX, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK.**

WOODLAND FOE

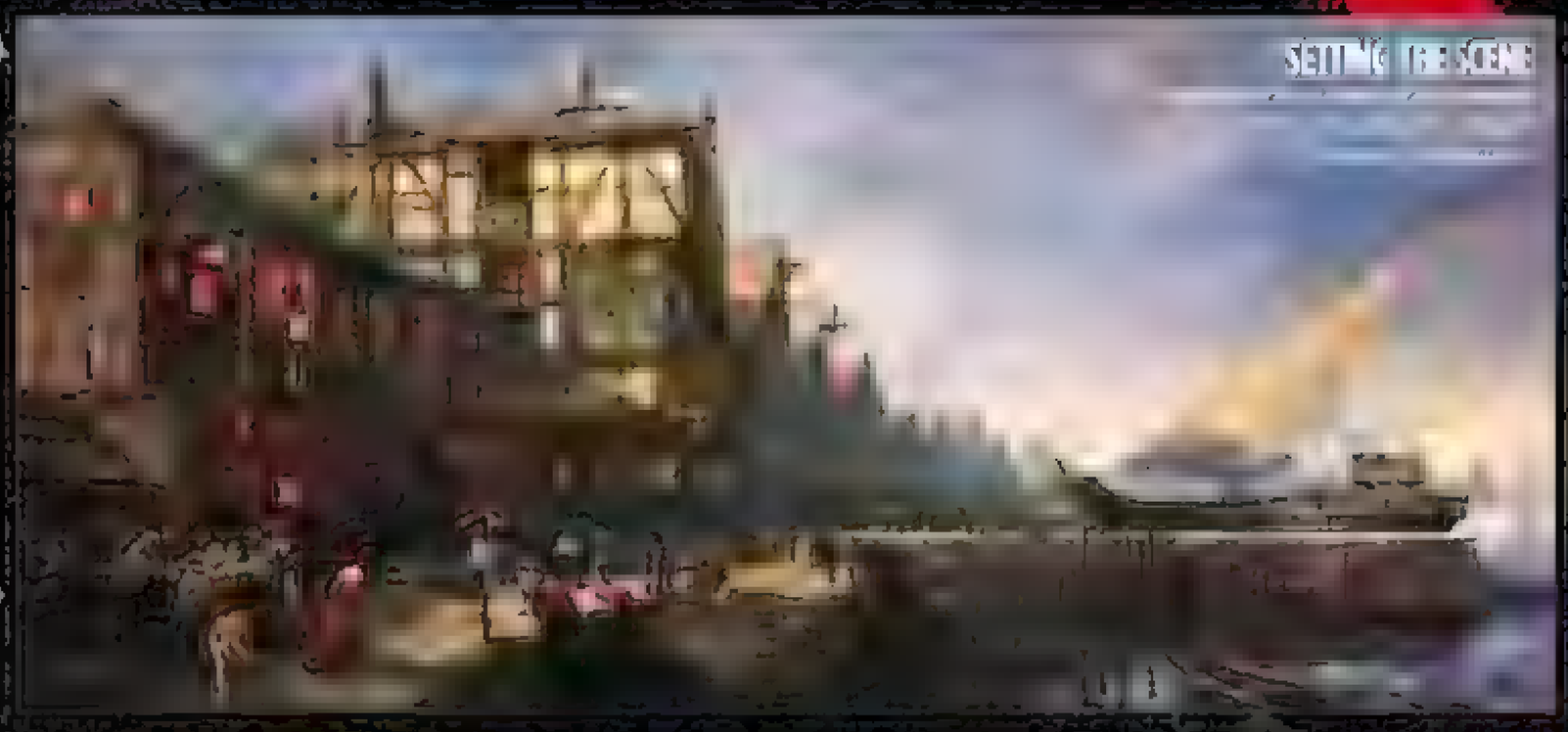
The Witcher 3's main character Geralt of Rivia encounters epic enemy the Leshen in the third and final instalment of the series.

WITCHFINDER GENERALS

CD Projekt RED has completed one of the most anticipated open-world games of 2014. We spoke to the art director and his team about making **The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt**

Polish game studio CD Projekt RED only has around 160 employees and so may, on the surface, appear to be a humble independent games developer. But by the look of the concept art for The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt, it's got the ambition to match any of its bigger international siblings.

The Witcher 3 is, to put it bluntly, bloody massive – an open-world RPG that's bigger than the studio's previous Witcher iterations by a country mile. The studio's already shown that it can do high fantasy, gritty gameplay and plenty of varied visuals with the previous two Witchers. But Wild Hunt, the finale to a tale that follows the journey of main magic man Geralt of Rivia, is an estimated 35 times the size of the last one. That means some substantial changes: new approaches to gameplay, loads more side quests, and a heap more art to start the fire of the whole creative process.



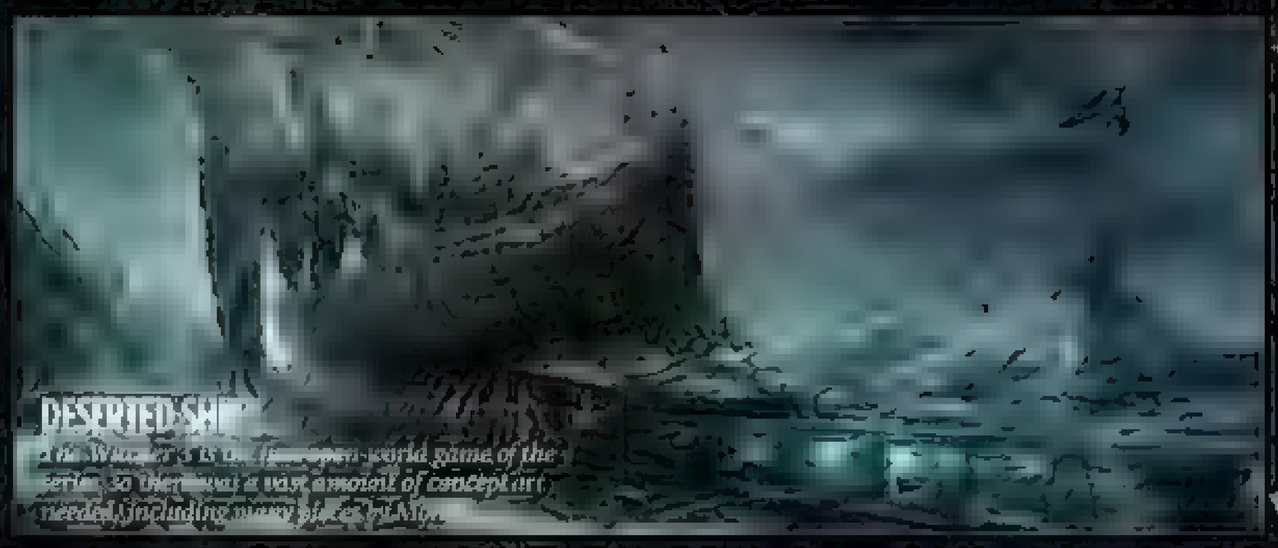
Art director Bartlomiej 'Bartek' Gawel and his team had quite a bit of source material when work started on the game two years ago. Part of the job description was to know the work of Polish author Andrzej Sapkowski, whose work the games are loosely based around. To date he's written half a dozen Witcher novels and just as many collections of short stories.

Following on from the global success of Game of Thrones in recent years, Andrzej's novels, originally written in the 1990s, have been translated into English, and the art team at CD Projekt RED is certainly familiar with his universe. "But as I've said before," Bartek says, "some things are common to the books and games, some are not. We don't have any sort of a golden ratio or do-not-cross line. It's all case-by-case."

> "Sapkowski's world is not binary – everything's grey, and I love it"

SHADES OF GREY

Like George RR Martin's Game of Thrones, The Witcher is a fantasy world unburdened by biblical notions of good and evil, something that art director Bartek seized upon when he joined the team for The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings. "I like Mr. Sapkowski's books very much. The world they illustrate is not binary – everything's grey, and I love it."



The Witcher 3 is the first open-world game of the series, so there was a vast amount of concept art needed, including many pieces of Ma...



WARRIOR BREED

Lead character artist Paweł Mielniczuk was integral in developing the many characters that populate The Witcher



Talking of grey, there may not be an awful lot of bright summery hues spreading through The Witcher 3, but concept artist



Marek Madej who joined the team 20 months ago after working on Lars von Trier's 2011 film Melancholia, feels that by limiting the range of colours in the world, the artists have been able to bring cultural details to the fore.

"Like Sapkowski's work, we've drawn from Slavic culture," he says. "The world he created is so vivid and definitely has its unique feel when compared to similar



DON'T LOOK BACK

Art director Bartek and his team referenced everything from 19th century Russian art to European market towns for inspiration

ICE TO MEET YOU

"Ice Giant was one of the first character designs I made for The Witcher 3." There were a lot of different sketches and versions, but this is basically the final concept. Though it also changed a lot during the modeling process," says Marek Madej.

MEET THE ARTISTS OF WITCHER 3

Bartłomiej Gawel



BACKGROUND

Bartłomiej graduated from Fine Arts in Wrocław and has been a professional illustrator for the past 15 years.

He has been active in the games industry and devoted to AAA video game projects since 2005. Bartek started as an art director and illustrator in the marketing agency Tequila, which is part of the JWA group.

After two years Bartek joined People Can Fly and worked as a concept artist on a AAA first-person shooter. In 2007 he joined CD Projekt RED as a concept artist on the AAA title The Witcher.

Since then the illustrator has worked as lead concept artist on The Witcher, The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings, The Witcher 2: Enhanced Edition, and currently, The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt, which is due out early next year.

CURRENT ROLE

Art director

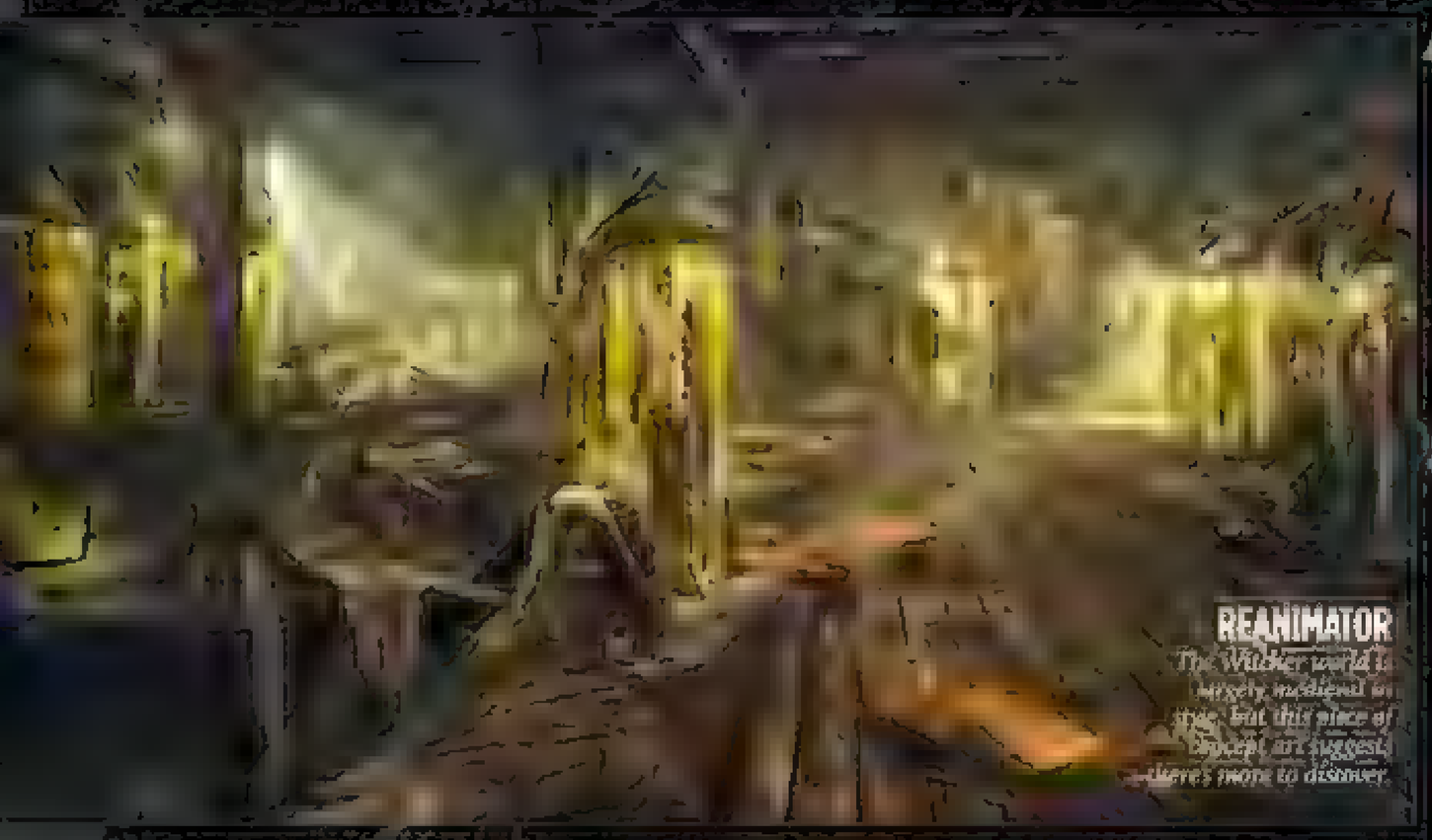
WHAT HE LOVES ABOUT THE VISUALS OF THE WITCHER 3

"I really like the murky, Slavic mythology feel that some of the areas in the game have. The woods are dark and deep, the sense of mystery and something ominous is always in the air. It's really





To see how Bartłomiej created the cover turn to page 64



works of the fantasy genre, and we've definitely captured this in the game."

On the one hand we're in a very comfortable situation because we're working with something that's already been created and fleshed out in the form of books," says Bartek. "This gives us a ready made, coherent world. On the other hand, there are instances that we need to improvise and put some of our creative vision on the table – some of the monsters are a perfect example of that."

Indeed, in his books Sapkowski describes many of the creatures as simply 'scary'. "This is where our creativity kicks in," the art director continues. "Another example is when the specific monster from the book just doesn't work well in a video game – this can be for a number of reasons. We then try to enhance it while trying to stick with the general idea Sapkowski had. It's not easy, but we always try to make it work."

Presumably in a world shackled by an author's vision, the art team has more room to create than the game's writers? "It's a difficult question to answer. I think that the level of creative freedoms are similar for the writer and the artist – we all work on a game with its distinct story to tell, and we all have the books in the back of our heads," says Bartek. "When we create a monster for the game we stick to the lore but, truth be told, the possibilities within that lore are almost endless. Yes, there are rules – but we have a lot of creative freedom within them."

WELCOME TO THE BIG COUNTRY

With a game that purports to be 20 per cent larger than Skyrim, and that puts as much emphasis on the side quests as its main story arc (apparently the side stories will take the same time to complete as the main – 50 or so hours), each corner of the Witcher world needed to be distinct. "The first thing we did was establish the

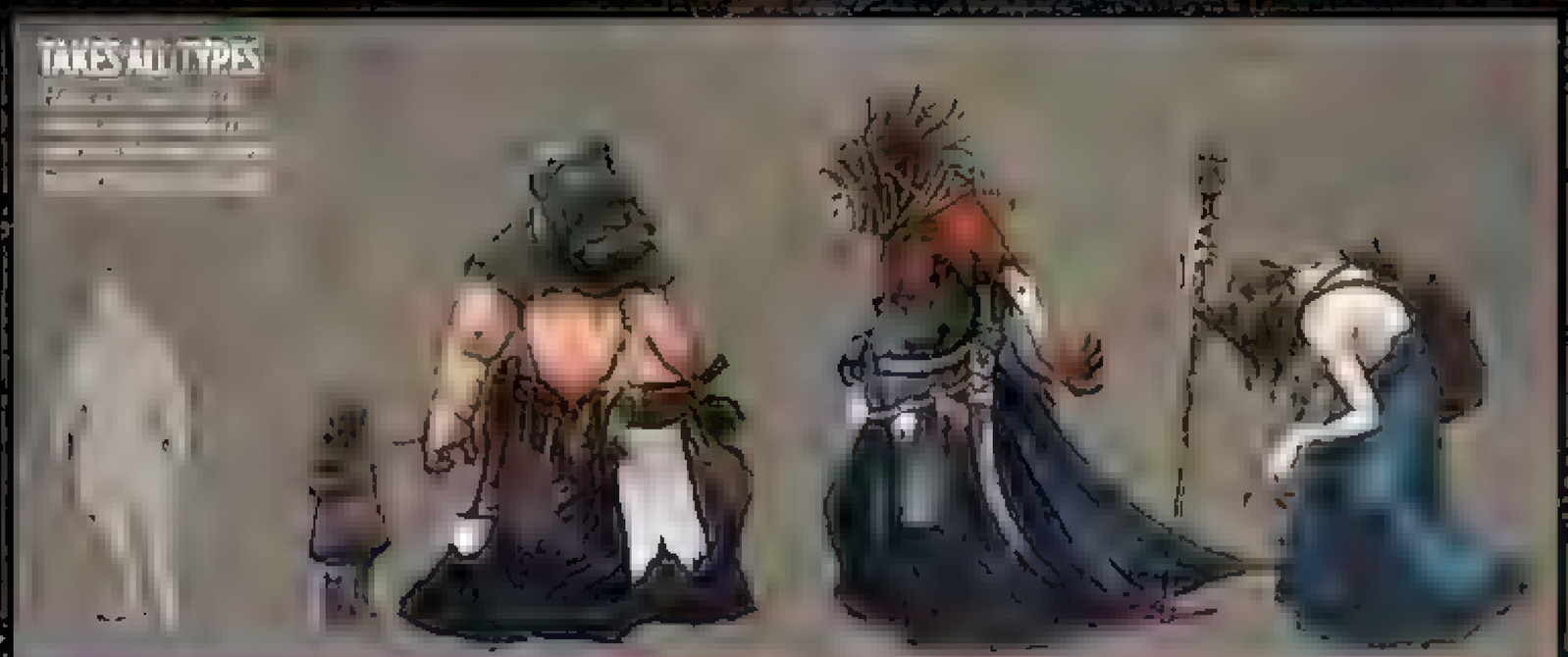
> "When we create a monster we stick to the lore, but the possibilities within that lore are almost endless"

FIRST IMPRESSIONS



Creating art for The Witcher meant high standards. But even when his work was approved, it wasn't enough for Marek Madej...





Marek Madej



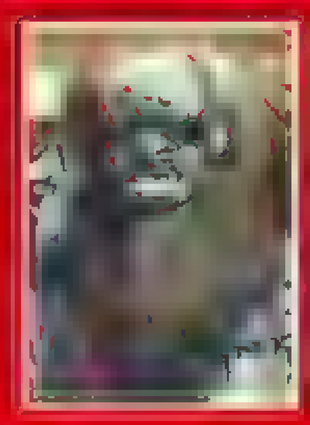
BACKGROUND
Marek has come to video-game production via [illegible]
CURRENT ROLE
Concept artist
WHAT HE LOVES ABOUT THE VISUALS OF THE WITCHER 3
"Everyone should find a place where he or she fits with his or her own style and in a genre he or she loves. What I like about The Witcher is the dark and realistic approach to visual design it adopts! It's a nice contrast to typical high fantasy we see so often.

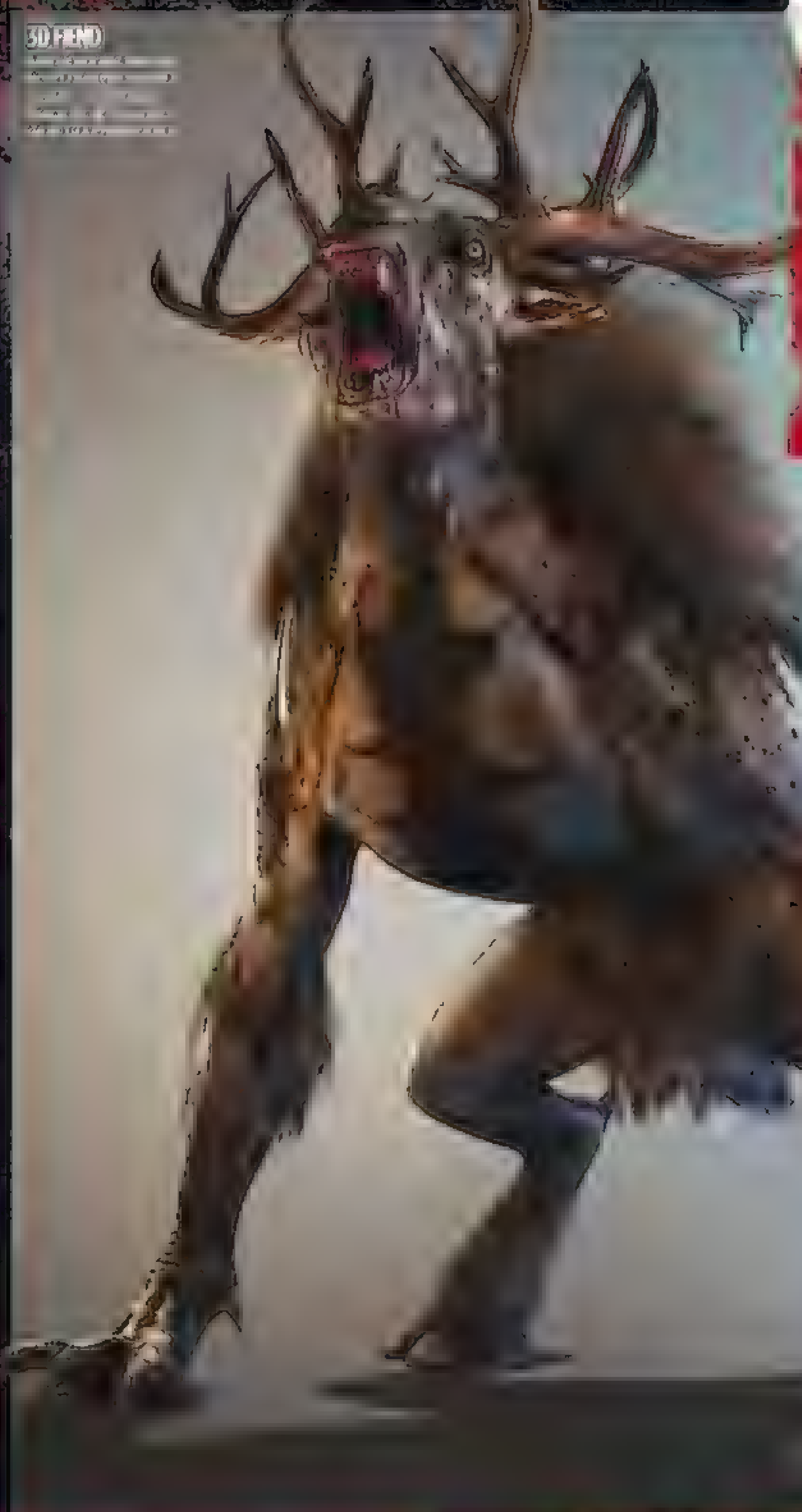


Pawel Mielniczuk



BACKGROUND
Pawel has worked at CD Projekt RED since 2006 and is the co-creator of all The Witcher games. He's a 3D artist and in charge of the team developing characters for The Witcher 3.
CURRENT ROLE
Lead character artist
WHAT HE LOVES ABOUT THE VISUALS OF THE WITCHER 3
I really love the weather system and the ambience it creates. It tends to get very creepy when you get lost in a forest during a thunderstorm! It fits really well into the overall dark art style.





3D SHADES

Bartłomiej "Bartek" Gaweł explains the process for characters and environments

"If a character is completely new, we start with sketches. During this stage we search for references, with weekly meetings. After this process finishes we pick the designs we see potential in and try to focus not only on designing but also on figuring out the stuff that helps the design sell itself. If the idea is bad, the best rendering won't help.

Concept artist Marek Madej, who designed both of these versions of the Fiend, explains: "Usually, while working on creatures and monsters, designing directly in 3D in Zbrush is involved, but every time it's also different. Sometimes it's just a quick sculpt based on the 2D work in the concept and sometimes we introduce some major changes just because stuff isn't working. When working on environments, we sometimes do a blockout with simple shapes that we, the concept artists, need to turn into game-ready pieces."



2D FIEND DESIGN

Jan Marek

BACKGROUND

Jan graduated with a master's degree in arts at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. He's been working as a concept artist at CD Projekt RED for over five years.

CURRENT ROLE

Senior concept artist.

WHAT HE LOVES ABOUT THE VISUAL OF THE WITCHER 3

"What I value in The Witcher the most is the coherency and authenticity of the world that we create. It's a sugar-free and mature game for people who like mature content."

Monika Zawistowska

BACKGROUND

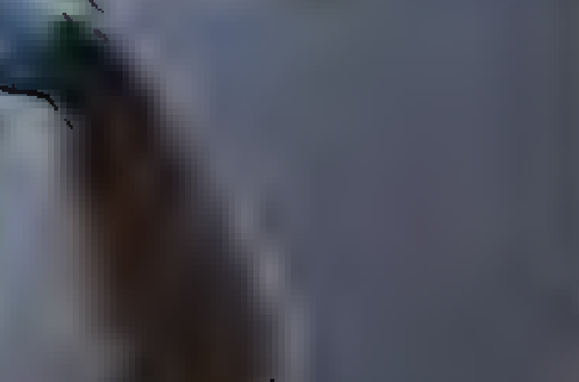
Monika studied architecture and industry technology in Warsaw, and has been working as a concept artist in CD Projekt RED since 2006.

CURRENT ROLE

Senior concept artist.

WHAT SHE LOVES ABOUT THE VISUAL OF THE WITCHER 3

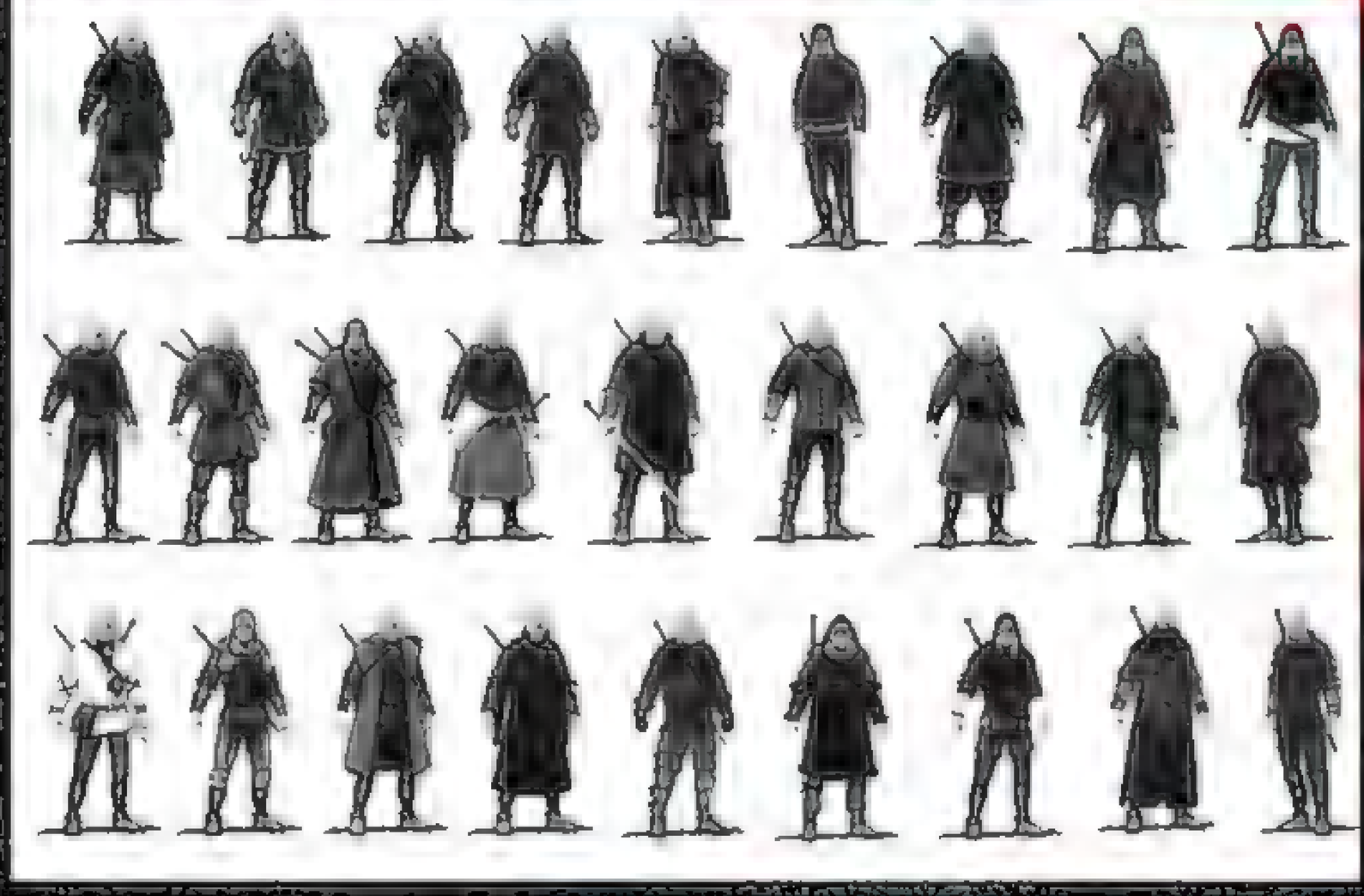
"I especially love the mood of the game, the landscapes and the distant views. I am glad that we took the decision to base the characters' clothes and weapon on those from medieval times and the Renaissance."





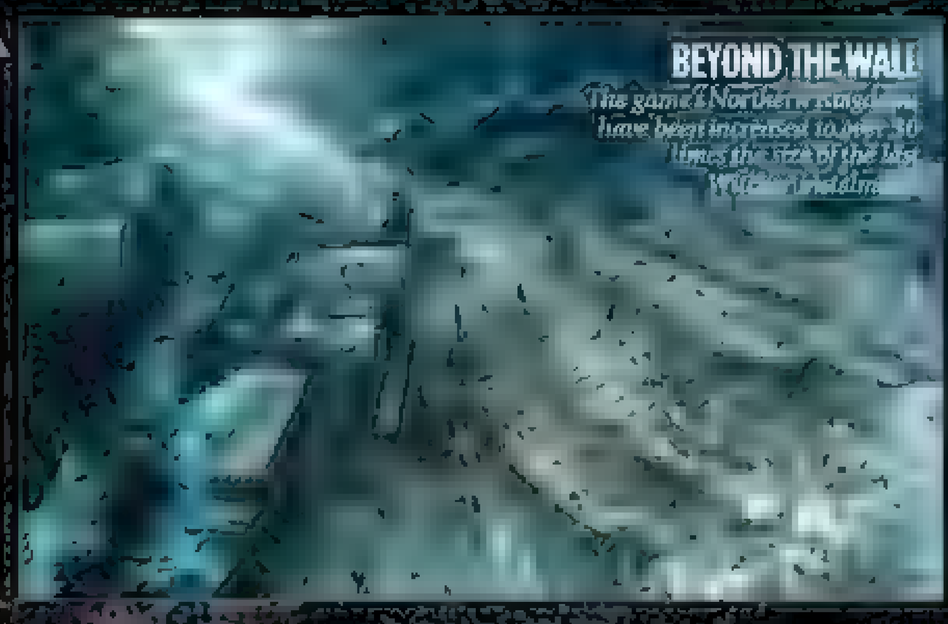
THE WITCHER MAN

Geralt may not be in another game, but he continues to star in the book series.



THE KILL LIST

The many faces of the game's prime bad-ass killer Geralt of Rivia, whose main task is to face the Wild Hunt.



BEYOND THE WALL

The game's Northern Kingdoms have been increased to over 30 times the size of the last Witcher installment.



WISE MEN OF THE NORTH

They're not all killers and beasts, as this perfectly placid druid character attests.

"ambience of the main regions players will traverse in the game," says Bartek. "Each of the lands has a distinct feel, a characteristic colour palette and its own set of inspirations. For example, Novigrad and its surrounding was greatly inspired by medieval Amsterdam."

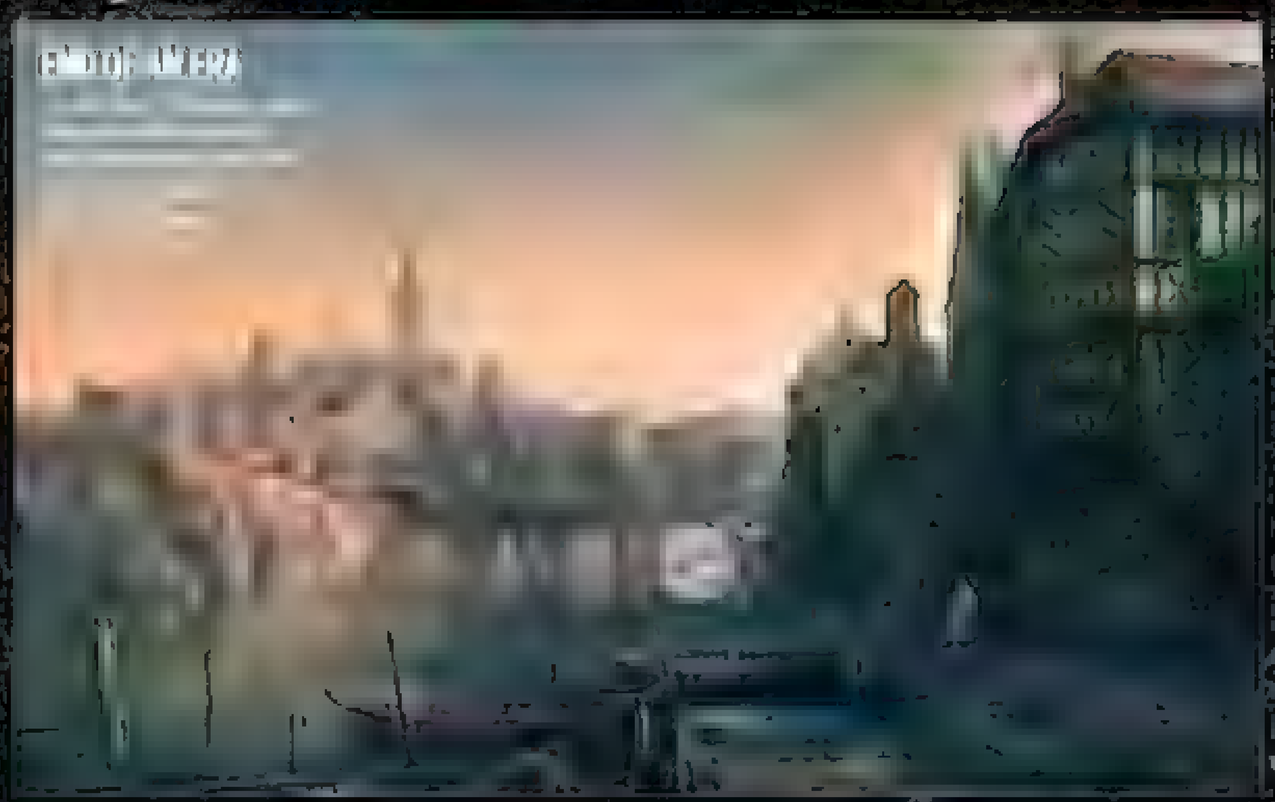
Artist Paweł Mielniczuk, a seven-year CD veteran, has worked on every Witcher release so far and has found it doesn't help to think of a game's world in terms of sections. "Our main objective is to give gamers a credible and coherent world. The world will vary in terms of visuals, but everything will be connected in a logical way. Skellige, Novigrad and No Man's Land all feature their own climate, a different political setup, different animals and monsters."

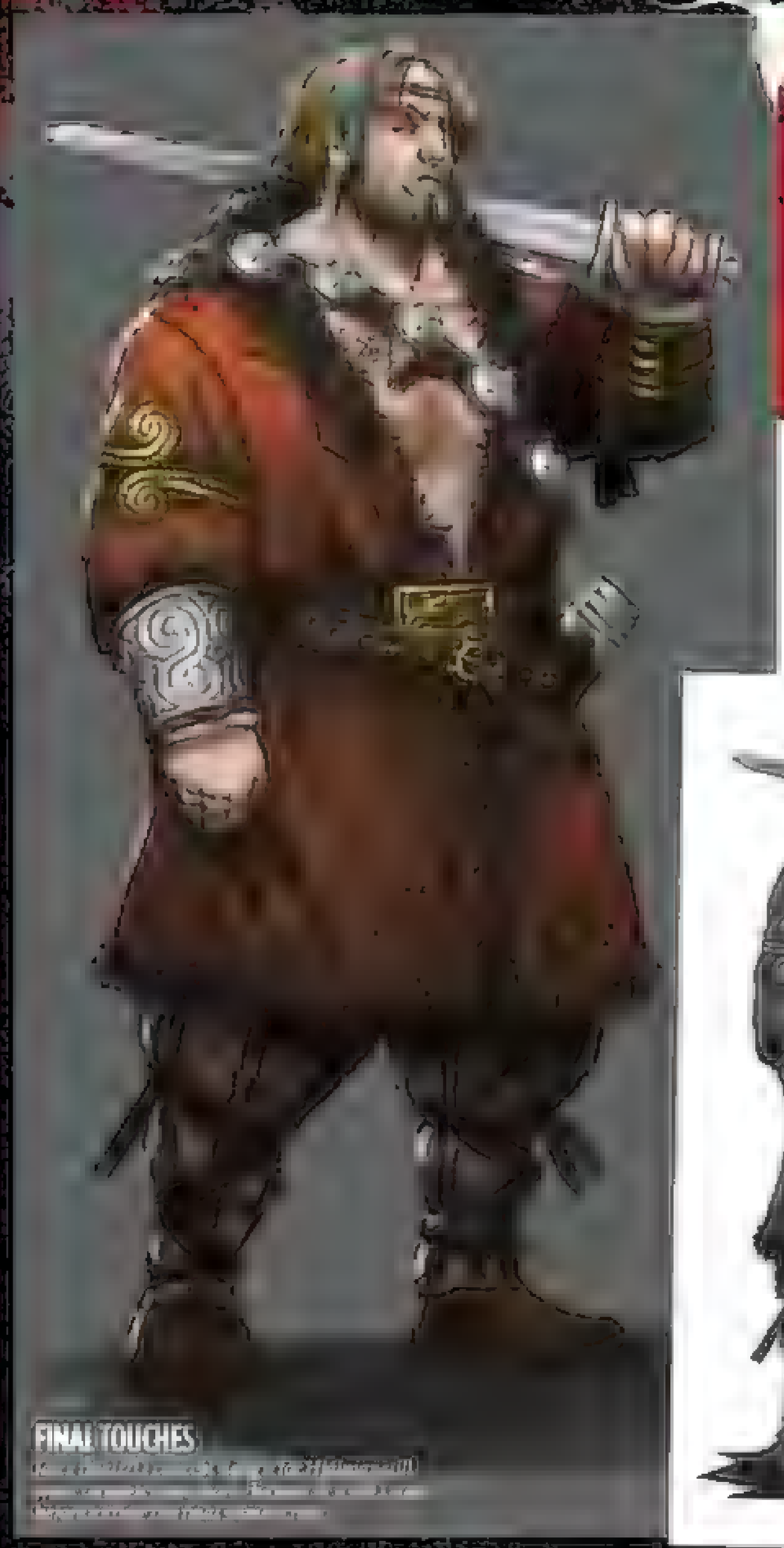
There's a big city too, full of riches and splendour, and there's a war-ravaged land where famine and black magic cast a dark shadow over everything. Finally, there's the untamed and primal land that's settled by battle-hardened warriors," but everything is working together in perfect sync," says Bartek. "That was the biggest challenge, and one of the greatest successes."

> Each of the lands has a distinct feel, colour palette and inspirations

FIELD TRIPS

Study the art on these pages or play the game when it's released next year, and you may be able to spot the medieval Amsterdam that Bartek refers to. But the art team absorbed various other references before taking to their tablets, too. They drew a lot from Russian realism paintings from the 19th and early 20th centuries, while some artists took to the real world and photographed old towns. Marek searched closer to home: "Mainly in Eastern realist painters from 19th century, especially Polish artists such as Jacek Malczewski, Józef Brandt or Julian Fałat."





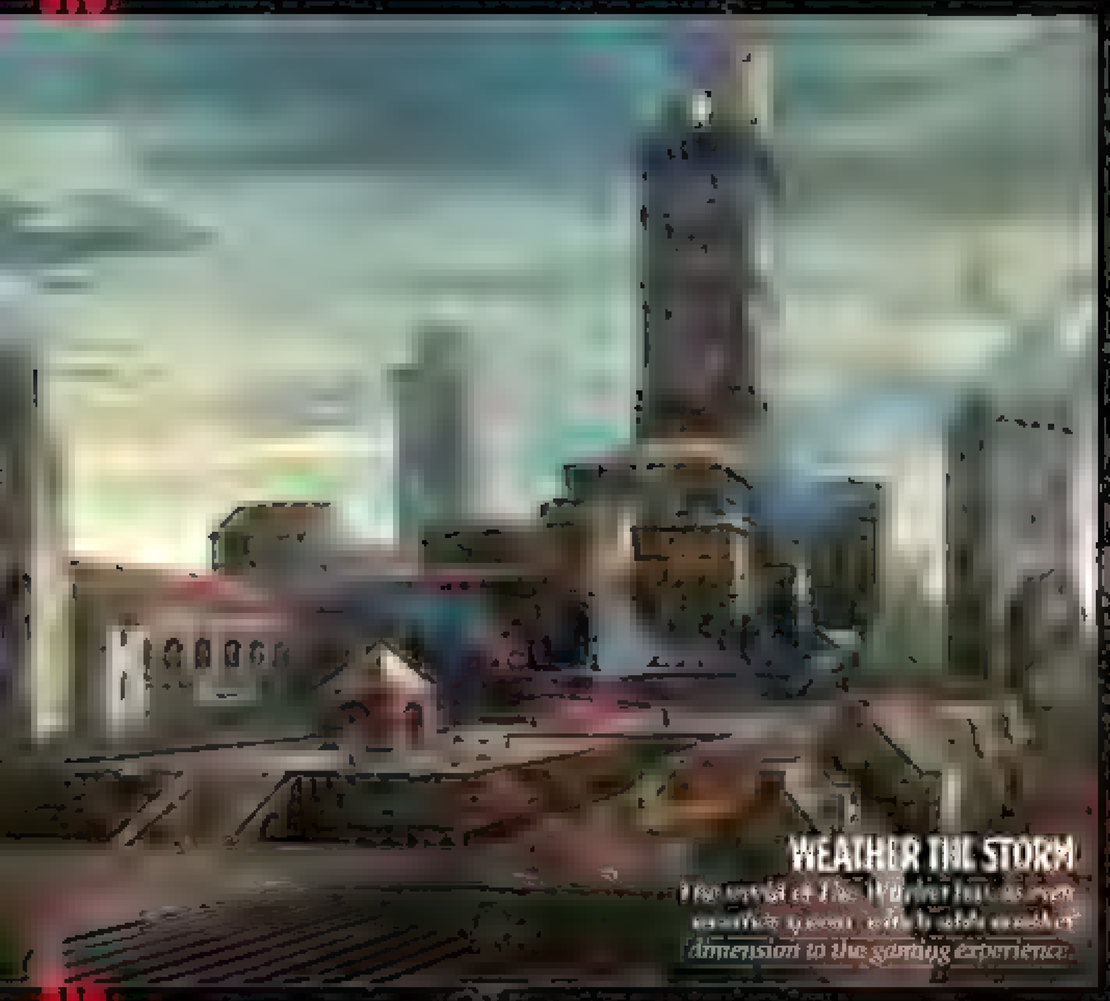
DARK ARTS

When not taking inspiration from 19th century Russian art or medieval castles, Jan Marek simply lets his mind wander









I'm a great fan of Jean Mabille, who was also one of the main inspirations for some parts of the environment." Others just donned their armour and cracked on with the sword fighting.

Many of the development employees are in fact real-life swordsmen. Lead game play designer Maciej Szczesnik explains: "Lots of people in the company fight in brotherhoods. They take part in battle re-enactments. They're kind of freaks for medieval armour and swords and all that stuff. We want to make it really believable."

Monika Zawistowska is a specialist when it comes to medieval architecture, says Bartek, "and Jan Marek is part of a knighthood and can handle a sword pretty well." At this point it might be worth asking, which came first, the game, or the team's passion for medieval battles?

ADDED DIMENSION

As well as being a Polish indie studio making a bid for the first grand next-gen, open-world game of 2014, CD Projekt RED also plays slightly different to most studios. It developed nearly everything in-house with its own technology, the team dress up like their game's main character, and many of the concept artists, such as lead character artist Rawel, worked their own 2D works into 3D.

> "Lots of people in the company fight in brotherhoods. They're freaks for medieval armour and swords"





This works well because there's quite a bit of to-ing and fro-ing between detail design and building the in-game characters. "2D is still the fastest way to explore various design possibilities," says Pawel, "but even when the 3D artists are working on their sketch for the in-game character – especially monsters – we still try to improve the proportions and design. That entails various versions and a lot of paintovers."

There are fundamental technical aspects to this new console game that trickle down to the concept art team. "With The Witcher 3 we've focused more on working with shaders in the engine," explains Pawel. "During the previous projects we rendered fake lighting onto the textures, like ambient occlusion and highlights, which masked the renderer's shortcomings."

Using a state-of-the-art engine, the new light and shadow rendering of this game "is another ball game. It's so good that burning highlights on textures now makes them look worse." Game textures are cleaner and crisper and their preparation quicker. "On the flip-side, we needed to spend more time testing shaders [illegible] in various lighting conditions and balance their properties."

All this means that, more than ever, the textures and details that the 3D artists work on are more likely to translate to the final game. The Witcher 3 really is an art-based game for a new generation.



Sketchbook

Vian Lee

Vian is never without his trusty Moleskine notebook, where much of his best work is roughed out

PROFILE

Vian Lee

COUNTRY: South Korea



South Korean-born Vian grew up with a passion for the look and feel of traditional art, and he went on to study visual design at university. The illustrator has created artwork for video games, movies and plays, while his personal work demonstrates a love for faeries, monster and emotive, often ambiguous portraits.

www.vianlee.cghub.com



GODDESS OF THE DAWN

"This is one of the sketches from my Moleskine that I developed into a digital painting. I was inspired by Eos, the dawn goddess from Greek mythology."

SKETCHES

"Here's a spread from my Moleskine, which features the original drawing of Eos. She contrasts nicely with the many different critters surrounding her!"



"I felt like drawing something beautiful for a change..."


DANCE
WITH THE WIND

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX

Sketchbook



ORIENTAL THEMES

"I normally use 2B pencils when drafting. Oriental cultures are my favourite theme – especially Korean cultures – but never anything pretty or beautiful."



MONSTERS AND FAERIES

"I also like drawing monsters and faeries. When I start them off as sketches in my Moleskine, I try to base them on real-life observations."

SELF-PORTRAIT

"I like to practise painting faces, and here's one reference model who's always available."





ANOTHER FREE DRAWING

"I don't like to use the eraser in my sketches. I draw each line freely but very carefully. When I make a mistake I try to incorporate it into the image."



"When I make a mistake I try to incorporate it into the image"





OLD FAIRY

"This dwarf gentleman was developed from an old pencil sketch in my Moleskine. I tried to give the piece a classical feel."

OTHERSIDE

This was a piece to practise facial expressions and scattering light. I referred to a photo, but the mysterious clown makeup makes this one of my favourite themes.


GYPSY DANGER
"The red white and blue markings, the classic blue steel WW2 paint job! Gypsy Danger is patriotic but not overstated. I'm needed to feel like an iconic piece of American military history brought back to life."

CAUTION!



THE ART OF HUGO MARTIN

How drawing skills learned as a child helped this concept artist bring mech designs to the multiplex in this year's Pacific Rim

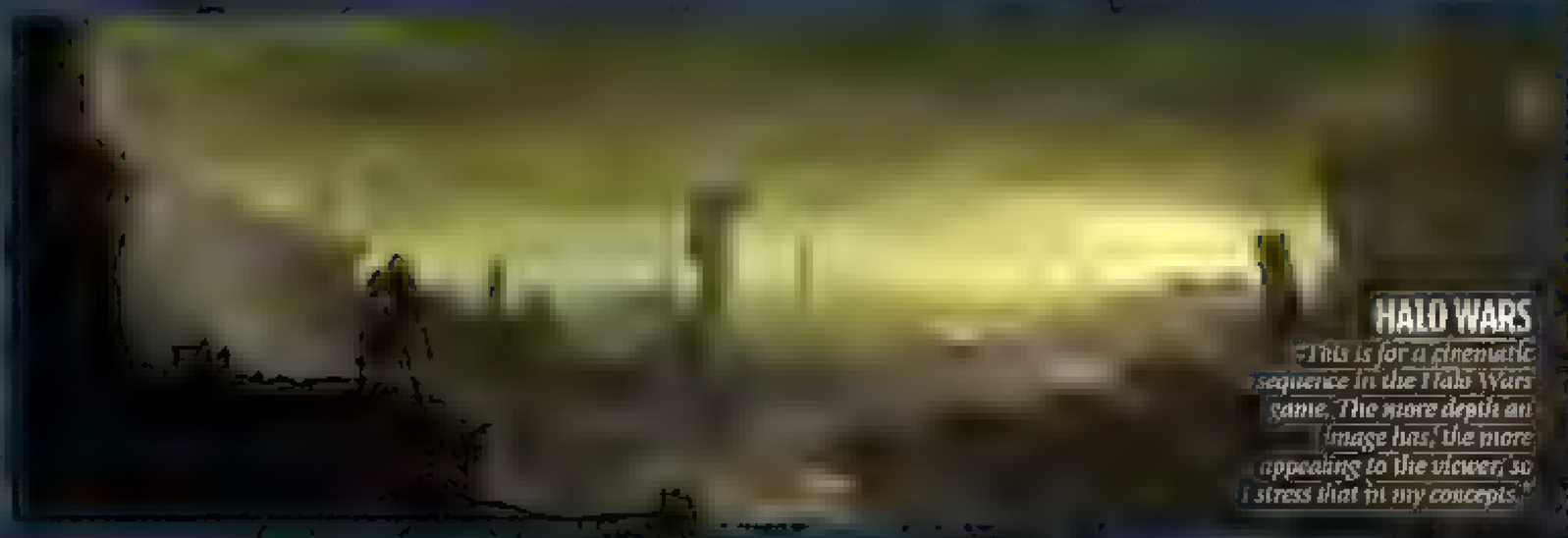


Giant robots? Check. Awesome futuristic cityscapes? Check. Formidable sea monsters causing wanton destruction? Check and check! The works of Hugo Martin have all the ingredients you need if you love sci-fi art. Take a closer look, though, and you'll soon see that beyond the action, he's a master of creating mood and atmosphere. It's no surprise that he was chosen as one of the concept artists for one of the biggest blockbusters of the year so far, Pacific Rim. He's also worked on The Avengers and Wolverine, and a slew of computer games including Warhammer Online: Star Wars: The Force Unleashed and Halo Wars.

His latest role is at id Software in Dallas, the company behind Doom, Quake and Rage. "I'm at my dream job," says Hugo. "I'm the studio art director, and we have a very exciting project we're in production on. I can't tell you what it is, though! I'm working with the amazing team of artists and designers here and to help bring it to life. Like any studio, the team functions better when we're all working together, keeping each other informed. From game designers, to programmers, animators, concept artists and modellers, we all need some insight into what each department is doing, so I help maintain that sense of collaboration as much as possible."

Trust us, Hugo's project isn't only exciting. Like Pacific Rim, it's huge.

I got a Draw 50 Cartoon Characters book as a kid and spent hours on it



Although he's in the midst of a flourishing career in concept art, Hugo has never forgotten how he developed his earliest drawing skills. When you ask most artists how they got started, they usually mention a project that put them on the map, a book cover or a creature that made it into a game or film. Instead, he recalls a learn to draw book he had as a child.

"I remember getting a Draw 50 Cartoon Characters book as a kid and spending hours following the simple instructions laid out on the pages. Starting from a sphere and adding basic primitive geometric shapes on top, you'd build up the forms

ARTIST TIP

EAT CAKE

"You have to love the cake more than the icing to make it as a pro artist. The cake is the daily grind – the hours at your desk. The icing is the reward of a finished piece. Becoming a pro takes thousands of hours, but if you love the act of making art you'll put in the time. Ninety eight per cent of being an artist is about the cake."

DANGER CONN POD

"Del Toro loves colour so I tried to emphasise that here. Smoke and atmosphere is a concept artist's best friend when it comes to sci-fi."

DREAM TRACK DEBUT

Putting metal to the metal for Naughty Dog

"These images were done during my time at Naughty Dog for the game Jak X: Combat Racing. I'd say these were a key piece for me in my career because it was my first job out of Art Center and the first time I felt like a real concept artist. I'd done the work, put in my time studying and now was getting paid to do the kind of work I loved without compromise creatively speaking.

If you'd asked me what I'd do for fun out of school, if money were no object then I would have described what I was asked to do on my first day at Naughty Dog. I went home every day with a smile on my face. I was in heaven."

engine concept

control panel

final design

leaf suspension



JAK X COMBAT RACING

"I gather reference before each project to make sure I don't repeat myself. For this I used Formula One cars and Mad Max reference."


THE FORCE UNLEASHED
"I like to cast shadow patterns onto the characters in my images when I can to add variety to the lighting."

... and then add in the details at the end. In an hour I'd have a finished character on the page and I was hooked," he says.

Even when working on Pacific Rim, Hugo used the techniques he developed at an early age. "I sat there with Guillermo del Toro doing basically the same thing as that which I had been doing when I was eight years old," he says.

FINDING FRAZETTA

Later, his mother found him an art tutor – none other than the then-retired Bluebaum Rafael DeSoto, who had been a master of pulp in the 1930s, and who painted covers for The Spider, The Black Mask and more. DeSoto introduced the young Hugo to the work of other inspiring illustrators from Norman Rockwell to Norman Rockwell and on to Frank Frazetta. Frazetta's paintings, he says, are burned on his memory.

The idea of becoming a concept artist probably didn't occur to Hugo's attention years later, when he was studying for a bachelor's degree at the Pratt Institute in New York. One day a group from the art department at Pixar gave a presentation at the Institute, and this really opened Hugo's eyes to the possibilities. "I knew I'd have to work through their cool stuff and then figure out what I wanted to do with my life – become a concept artist," he says. "The idea that I could make a living designing spaceships and robots seemed too good to be true. That realisation was one of those 'aha' moments."

However, Hugo didn't apply for jobs after finishing his degree at Pratt. Instead he felt he still had to fine-tune his industrial design skills. The ability to render complex machinery, he reasoned, would boost his chances of drawing sci-fi imagery for a living. So he went to the Art Center in Pasadena, California, and enrolled in the transportation design course.

"Making it through the first few semesters in the trans dept at ACCD was one of the most challenging things I'd ever done up to that point in my life," says Hugo. "All endless, giant rendering, clay models – hard work for extended periods of time. At the same time, I learned more there than I ever thought I would."

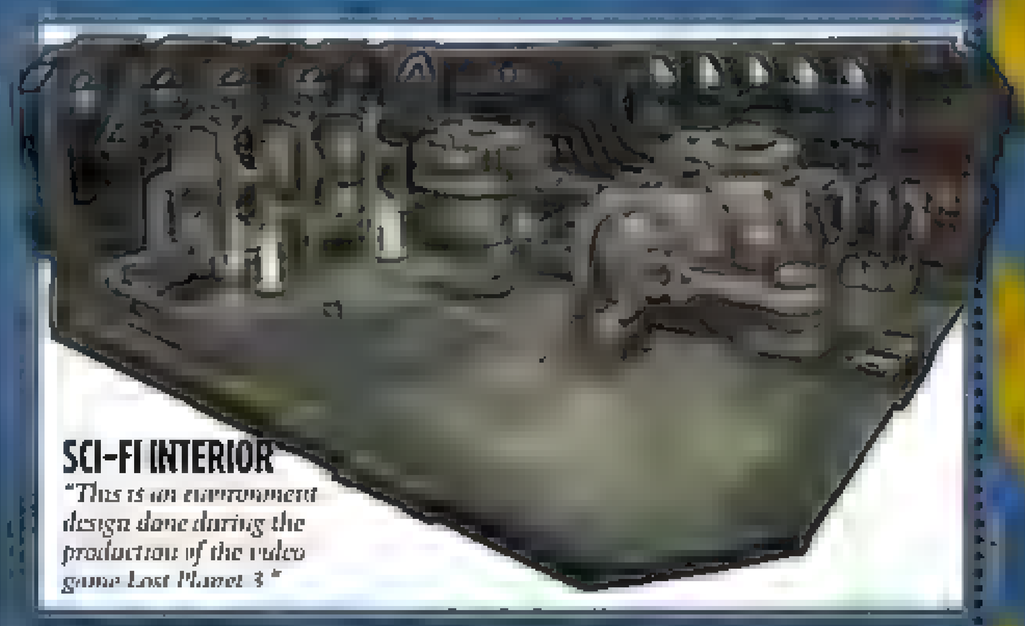
> I sat there with Guillermo del Toro doing basically the same thing I had been doing when I was eight

NAUGHTY BUT NICE

During the Art Center years, Hugo landed a job at Naughty Dog, where the Crash Bandicoot franchise began. During an early art test – a job he considers to have been the most fun role at his career so far – Hugo was working on the title lab. "Creative Director [name redacted] – although then he was accepted the job he didn't know what proper clay modelling was. "When I found out I was like a little kid in my seat freaking out, excited to start," he says. "I had to design over 50 cool weapons, elements and vehicles for the game in a short period, and I was in heaven. I'd say it was the best learning experience you can have when you're just starting out. You learn so much in your first few months at work."

BIT OF A BLUR

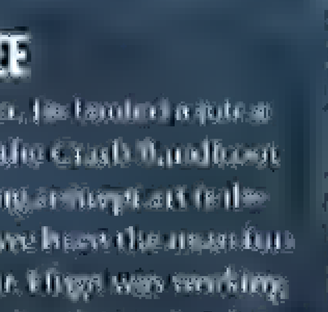
A year later he moved to Blur Studios where he worked on a whole range of other projects, including Star Wars: The Force Unleashed. Like just about everyone


SCI-FI INTERIOR
"This is an environment design done during the production of the video game Lost Planet 3."


STRIKER EUREKA
"A concept design for the character done during pre-production of the film Pacific Rim."

HUGO MARTIN
VITAL STATISTICS

"I was like a little kid in my seat freaking out"



Age: 37
Current location: Dallas, Texas
Place of birth: New York
Years as a professional: 10
Favourite thing in life: My wife and kids
Your introduction to art: Comics
Your influences: Rafael DeSoto, Frank Frazetta, Norman Rockwell, N.C. Wyeth, Syd Mead, Hans Ruedi Giger, Andrew Loomis
Who you've influenced: [redacted] people who have taken my classes at Gnomon where I taught for four years.
Next project: Can't say just yet
Books or games? Books
Jaeger vs AT-AT? Jaeger
Website: www.hugomartin.net


GYPSY DANGER HEAD DESIGN
"I used human anatomy as inspiration for the design of the Jaeger's mechanics."



BIG STOMPY ROBOTS!

Bringing life to the seas of Pacific Rim, Hugo Martin worked with legendary director Guillermo del Toro

[illegible] on the design of [illegible] Kaiju you see fighting Striker Eureka.

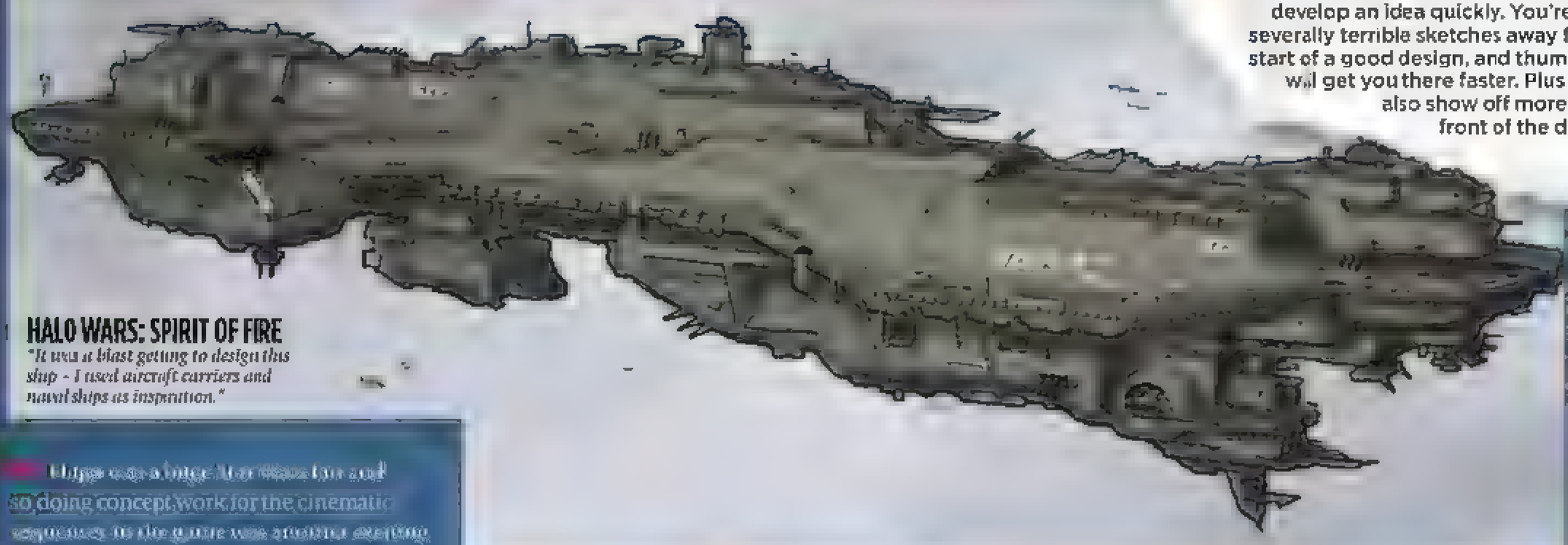
"The entire art team [illegible] with Guillermo del Toro daily. He's a very hands-on director. He keeps his concept team close by during pre-production. Guillermo's a designer himself and has a great love for the craft of illustration and design. He would sometimes come into a Jaeger or Kaiju design with a strong visual [illegible] in mind and sometimes he'd let you sketch for a while and develop the idea from there, but he'd always be looking at the work and providing direct[illegible] out visually. He loves colour and bold shapes in design and detail.

"Most of the design work I do on jobs usually makes it to the screen looking similar to what I drew originally, if we done my job correctly. But seeing these designs blown up on an IMAX screen in Pacific Rim was pretty memorable. Never before had I seen a design that I worked on that huge with that much exposure. Walking through NYC and seeing all the billboards with the Jaegers on them, it was kind of surreal."

ARTIST TIP

THUMBNAILING

"This is key. You have to develop a shorthand as a concept artist. This will enable you to develop an idea quickly. You're usually severally terrible sketches away from the start of a good design, and thumbnailing will get you there faster. Plus you can also show off more ideas in front of the director."



HALO WARS: SPIRIT OF FIRE
"It was a blast getting to design this ship - I used aircraft carriers and naval ships as inspiration."

Hugo was a huge Star Wars fan and so doing concept work for the cinematic sequences in the game was another exciting moment in his career. "That job was less about design, and more about lighting, mood and story," he explains. "The designs were already completed by the great artists at LucasArts and so our main focus was on doing production illustrations for the cinematics, which are ready to help establish the look and feel of the scene.

STRIKER EUREKA
"I wanted to capture the right sense of scale here. It was pre-production, and important to take the designs into the proper context as they might be used in the game."



The pressure was on. You had to make it look great. It had to feel like Star Wars

"The pressure was certainly on. You had to make it all look great. It needed to feel like Star Wars, but also provide the audience with a fresh take on things through the use of lighting and atmosphere. There's a huge space to fill in, and so everything had to match the story they had to tell, which can be quite challenging. Occasionally you might do something that would break a rule in the Star Wars universe, so LucasArts kept a close watch from that."

Hugo mainly creates his art in Photoshop, occasionally turning to 3ds Max just to get some basic forms in there to help him plan out the perspective of a scene. However, the bulk of his images always begins with quick thumbnails – scribbled on Post-it notes, which he keeps in front of him as he fleshes them out using his Cintiq.

"In computer games, the role of the concept artist has never been more important than it is today. With graphics capabilities so good, and gamers so discerning about where they spend their cash, it's never been more challenging, either. "The graphics are getting so good, the user's expectations are sky high, and they want to be captivated and excited by every new game that comes out of a studio," says Hugo. "They want things to feel like they're from a movie or real life and, yes, they're less tolerant of bad lighting and atmosphere. People know good lighting when they see it so we have to be able to give it to them."

BLADE HEAD
"I used the helicopters as a compositional device. The arrows pointing the viewer to where the action is. The fuzzy focus debris in the foreground puts you in the scene."

Thinking of a career in the games industry? Turn to page 80 to read Hugo's essential advice!

STUDIO PROFILE

JAGEX

One of the UK's most successful studios is working on a Transformers game – but what's it like to be a Jagex employee?

LOCATION: England
CURRENT PROJECTS: RuneScape 3
PAST PROJECTS: Carnage Racing, War of Legends, FunOrb, 8Realms, Herotopia, Ace of Spades
WEB: www.jagex.com

Jagex is something of an anomaly in the games industry. Founded in 2001, just after the bursting of the dotcom bubble shook faith in tech-based startups, it's gone from strength to strength.

Key to its success is RuneScape, which has become the world's most popular free-to-play MMO. As well as launching a host of other games and portals, the company has recently clinched a deal to create an MMO based on Hasbro's immortal Transformers franchise.

"Multiplayer and online gaming has grown incredibly over the past decade," says Gerard Miley, Transformers Universe's visua isation art director. "Gaming has become more mainstream and the definition of what makes a gamer has changed. For example, my wife spends more hours gaming on her iPad than I do on my console or PC, and I would have previously considered myself the gamer in our family."



Transformers Universe visua isation art director Gerard Miley oversees his team



It's this shift, this transformation if you will, that's kept Jagex afloat while others have sunk. It captured the casual, web-based gaming market at a time when Facebook and iOS were twinkles in Jobs and Zuckerberg's eyes. That, and the fact it respects its employees: it has featured in the Sunday Times' 100 Best Companies to Work For, and picked up a coveted Golden Joystick award as UK Games Developer of the Year.

Taking on the Transformers project has, according to Gerard, been a new opportunity for the studio to demonstrate what it does best. "I've always ensured the concept artists take ownership of a new robot design and follow its progress right through modelling and into the game," he says. "This collaboration between artists of different disciplines is essential to reach the necessary high standards we've set ourselves on Transformers Universe."

Alex Horton, Jagex's chief creative officer, echoes Gerard's sentiments, pointing out that the studio has a "great partnership" with brand owner Hasbro – which is just as well when you





MARTIN SEVERN

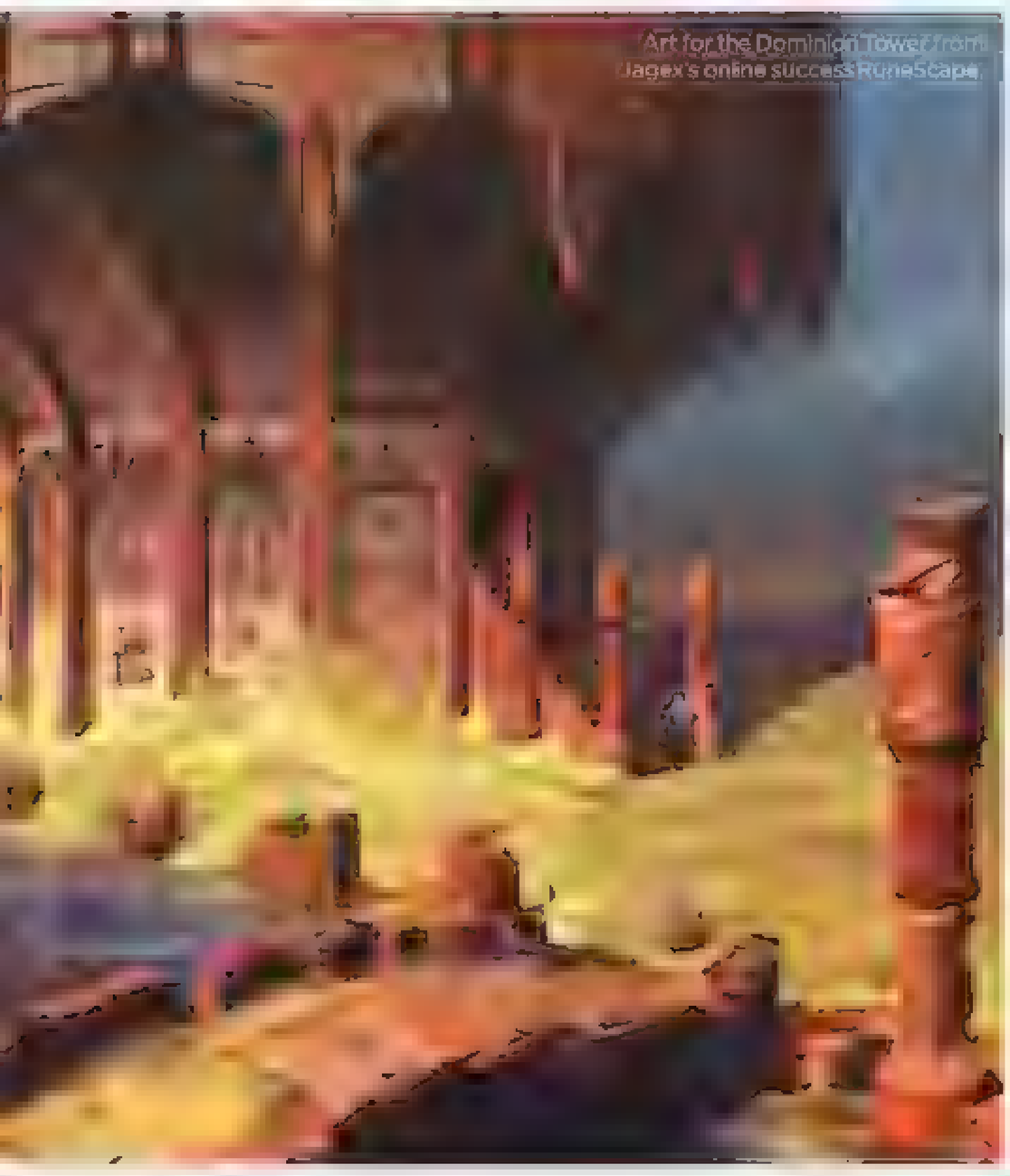
RuneScape's art director gives us the low-down on the video game

Why would you recommend working at Jagex?
Having spent most of my career working on two- to three-year long projects it's a real breath of fresh air to work on a game like RuneScape. You really have the chance to experiment with the game world and due to the nature of the projects there's always something fresh and fun around the corner. We have a genuinely fun team with a keen sense of humour that always keeps you on your toes, and at the end of the day leaves you looking forward to what tomorrow will bring.

What support and training do you offer at Jagex?
We have a great selection of weseasoned staff within the art department, some of who have been at Jagex for over 10 years. Whenever we have anyone new entering the team, they get paired up with a seasoned buddy and within no time they're up and running. For software training and general interest we use online training sites, enabling artists to access a host of training video tutorials for a number of packages including Photoshop and Maya. They can even access these tutorials from home. As well as this, we also provide life-drawing classes to the whole art team and encourage staff to give talks and share knowledge in our massive atrium.

How do you make sure your MMOs are updated to keep them fresh?
RuneScape is always being expanded with new content. This means we can always introduce new ideas from the team, leaving us scope to work on the more quirky asoects of RuneScape. For instance some of the concept art for the light hearted Bringing Home the Bacon quest earlier this year had me laughing out loud as it turned up at my desk.

What's Cambridge like to live in?
Having not long returned from a three-and-a-half year stint in Frankfurt, Germany, it's great to be living a stones throw from a good old English city again – and you don't get much more English than Cambridge. The city has fantastic architecture and it's steeped in history, plus there are beautiful museums, some really good restaurants and a great open market that really makes me feel at home once again. Oh, and pickles! I've spent so much money on pickles these last few months – couldn't seem to get them in Frankfurt.


Art for the Dominion Tower from Jagex's online success RuneScape







Top: The Jagex APC stands guard outside Jagex's Cambridge HQ. Below: The TU art team at work



Martin's career in the digital art industry spans four decades. Before joining Jagex he worked with Crytek on Crysis 2 and Ryse: Son of Rome.

www.runescape.com



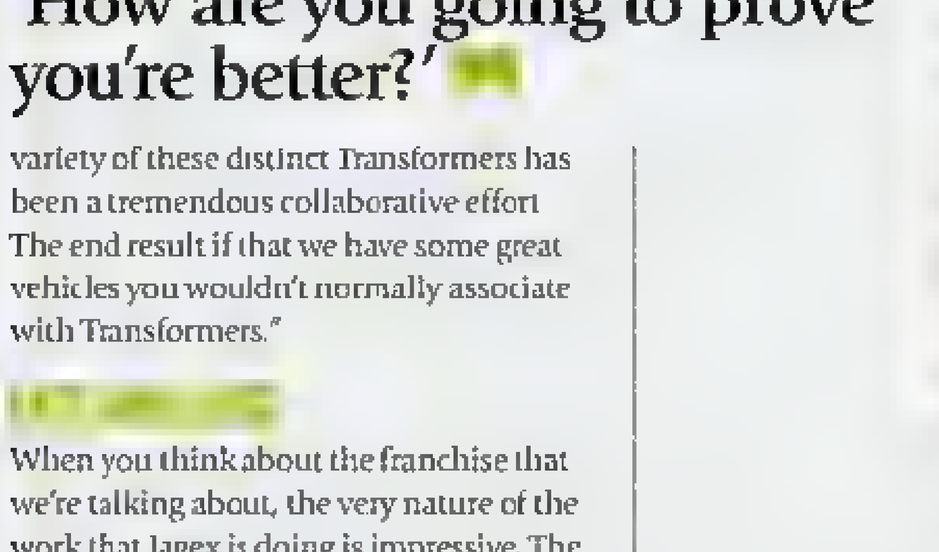
think about it. "We collaborate closely with them on everything, from new concept art through to our own story to differentiate the game," he says. "All of our signature characters are part of the new cast of Transformers, who you'll see featuring alongside the expected mainstays from the franchise. Getting the sheer scope and variety of these distinct Transformers has been a tremendous collaborative effort. The end result if that we have some great vehicles you wouldn't normally associate with Transformers."

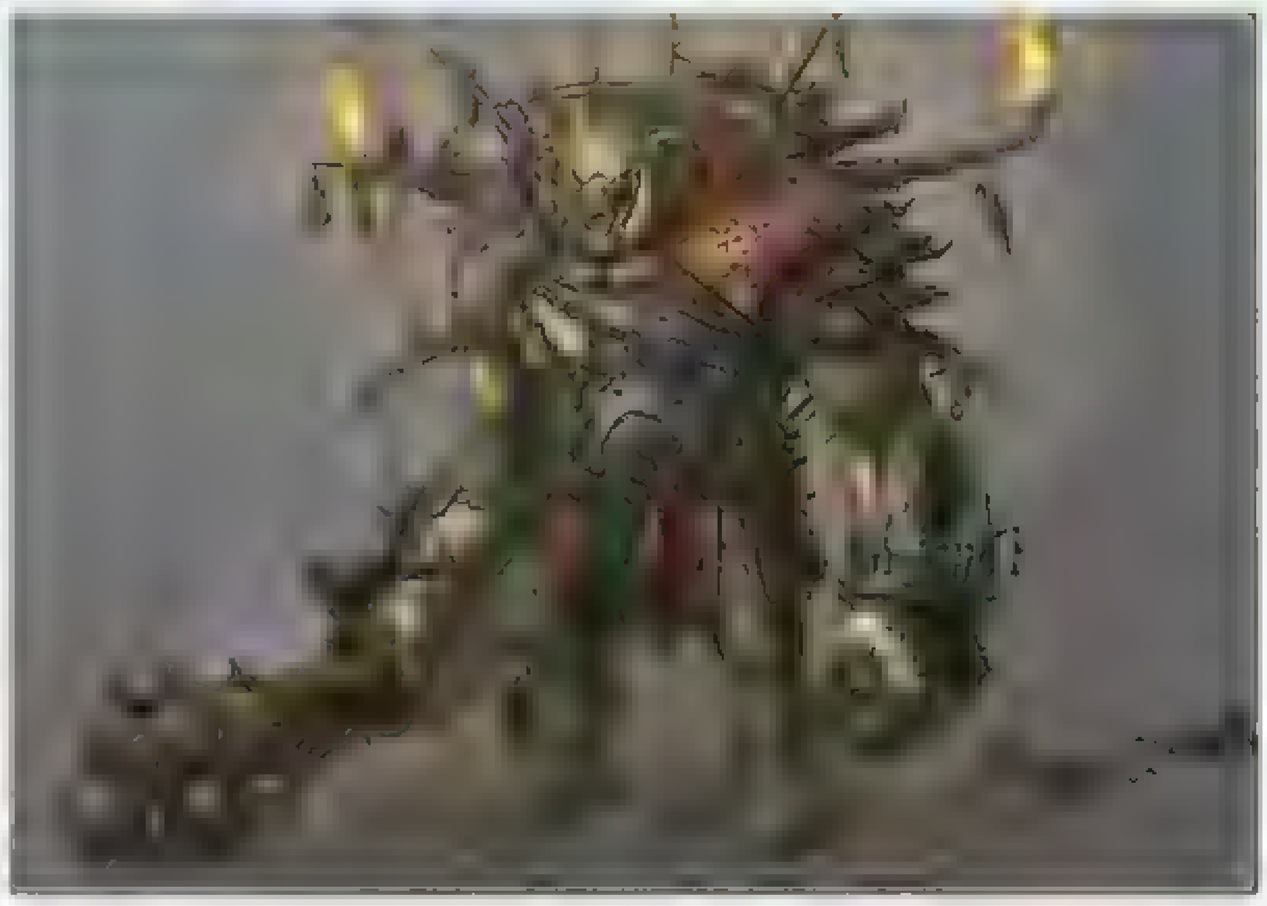
Impressively, all RuneScape's in-game art assets are created at Jagex, and only a few pieces of promotional art are outsourced

The question to ask is, 'How are you going to prove you're better?'

When you think about the franchise that we're talking about, the very nature of the work that Jagex is doing is impressive. The fact Hasbro has allowed Jagex to play fast and loose with its revered billion-dollar franchise is undoubtedly down to the studio's ability to innovate and stay ahead of the game. And although Jagex continues to do just that, this is something which is getting trickier by the minute. "There's no point whatsoever in going after someone else's game - thousands of other people are probably trying to do that too. The question to ask is, 'How are you going to prove you're better?'" says Alex.

Alex says the next incarnation of RuneScape should be "true to its roots but also built for the next decade."





While Jagex is understandably excited about its impressive rendering of the ancient battle between the Autobots and Decepticons, it still finds the time to keep RuneScape brimming with new content – it's updated once a week, in fact. Alex admits, however, that there's been a steep learning curve between working on the two games. "The most significant challenge for us was defining what exactly Transformers should be in a world where MMOs have changed," says the chief creative officer. "That required us to make an adjustment from the initial concept, which we've evolved into an awesome game." But change should not be feared. "I'm excited by the possibilities of where the games industry is right now, what we're going to do and how we'll do it."



Martin Severn, the RuneScape art director, seen here hard at work on new characters.



Tu art director Gerard takes a break from The Best of Dolly Parton to work on an environment





LEVEL UP

Dave Barker, senior concept artist, takes us through the art process of revitalising an old god character for RuneScape

For RuneScape's Battle of Lumbridge event we revisited Saradomin the deity of order and wisdom not a god anyone. We needed to capture those aspects and imagine him transformed to be opponent for another more macho god. The aim was to create a piece over several iterations that would be used to guide character modelling as well as adhering to established in-game lore



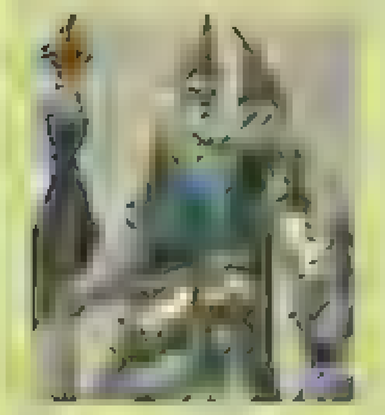
Beginnings

We start with a discussion to explore the direction, building on a mood from that conversation, using references. Very simple shapes and silhouettes are used to pin down the general character. Once we're happy with a look we add more detail.



Get dressed

Now we have a good sense of the general feeling, we'll build to add interest, detail and an initial colour scheme. The character can still change at this stage – we felt he needed to be less overtly martial and so added more flowing robes and other details.



Colourful character

We begin to add finer detail and more defined colours to really nail down his character. We find a great balance between his godly and martial aspects, which really helped define a strong and unique silhouette, vital to make him stand out.

Final image

We solidify the design, tidy the lines and add final fine details and colours. This is where most of the artist's effort goes, to bring all the ideas together and make them pop.

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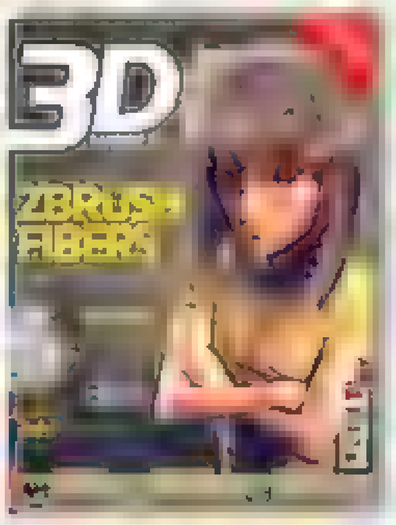
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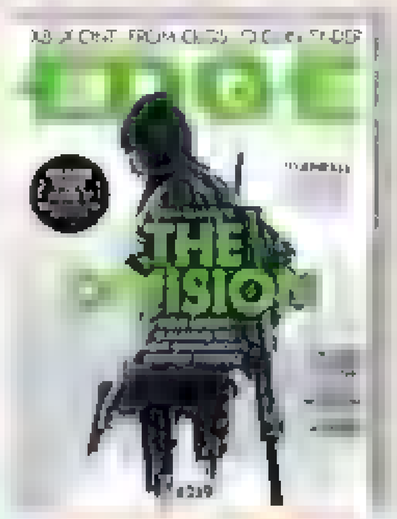
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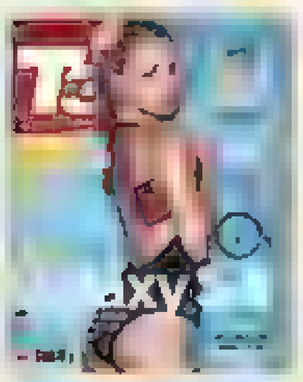
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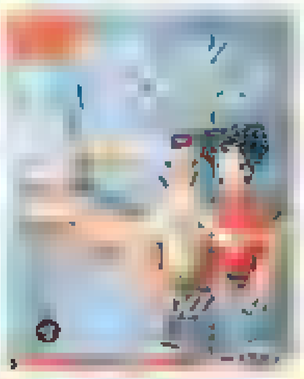
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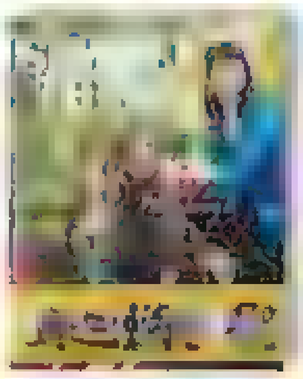
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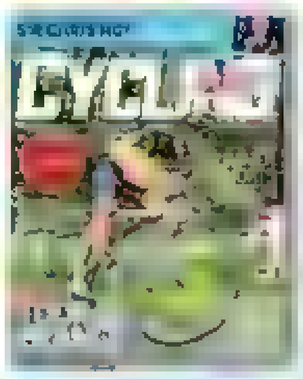
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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX Workshops

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Advice from the world's best artists



This issue:

Depict a dynamic video game scene
Bartłomiej Gaweł on the intricate creative process he used for this issue's cover.

Sci-fi weapon design advice
Brian Sum's considered tips for concepting sci-fi weapons for video games.

Create a monster for the movies
Monster guru Anthony Scott Waters on conveying ideas and story in concept art.

Design a video game opponent
Remember Me artist Fred Augis describes the thinking behind the concept of a robotic adversary.

Breaking into the games industry
id Software's Hugo Martin reveals how to make your portfolio stand out.

Step outside the comic frame
A comics golden rule says nothing should break out of the panel frame. Except, says PJ Holden, when it should.

Draw and paint in Manga Studio 5
Dave Kendall creates a steampunk behemoth and a medieval samurai castle.

Photoshop

DEPICT A DYNAMIC VIDEO GAME SCENE

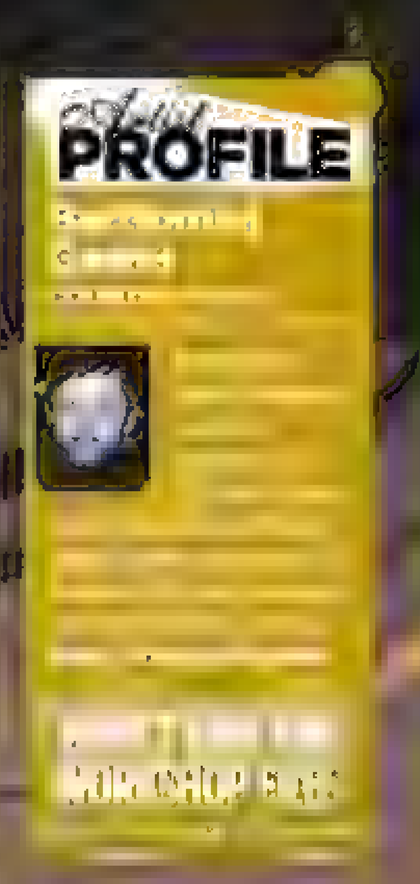
Bartłomiej Gawel explains the process he uses to create this month's cover art, featuring a dramatic encounter from The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt

This workshop will demonstrate how I develop an illustration from sketch to final art. You can use a multitude of techniques to complete a painting. For example, you can either approach it from the ground up and start in black and white, or initially go with colours and develop other elements simultaneously.

The use of photos for cropping, copying and painting to create the illustration is popular among concept artists because it speeds up the process – which is key to the job role, of course. My methodology is, in my opinion, the simplest. It involves initially focusing on a black and white picture, and only applying the colours at the very end of the creative process.

The whole workflow is broken into stages, so I'm only ever dealing with one problem at a time. Composition, chiaroscuro, value, colour – all those components combine to create a coherent picture. By dividing the process into particular steps, I can focus on each of them without fear of adversely affecting the other artistic elements.

However, this process also has its disadvantages, because it demands great patience from the artist. I have to be careful not to cut corners and skip to the next stage. If you're a patient person, I encourage you to try this workflow.

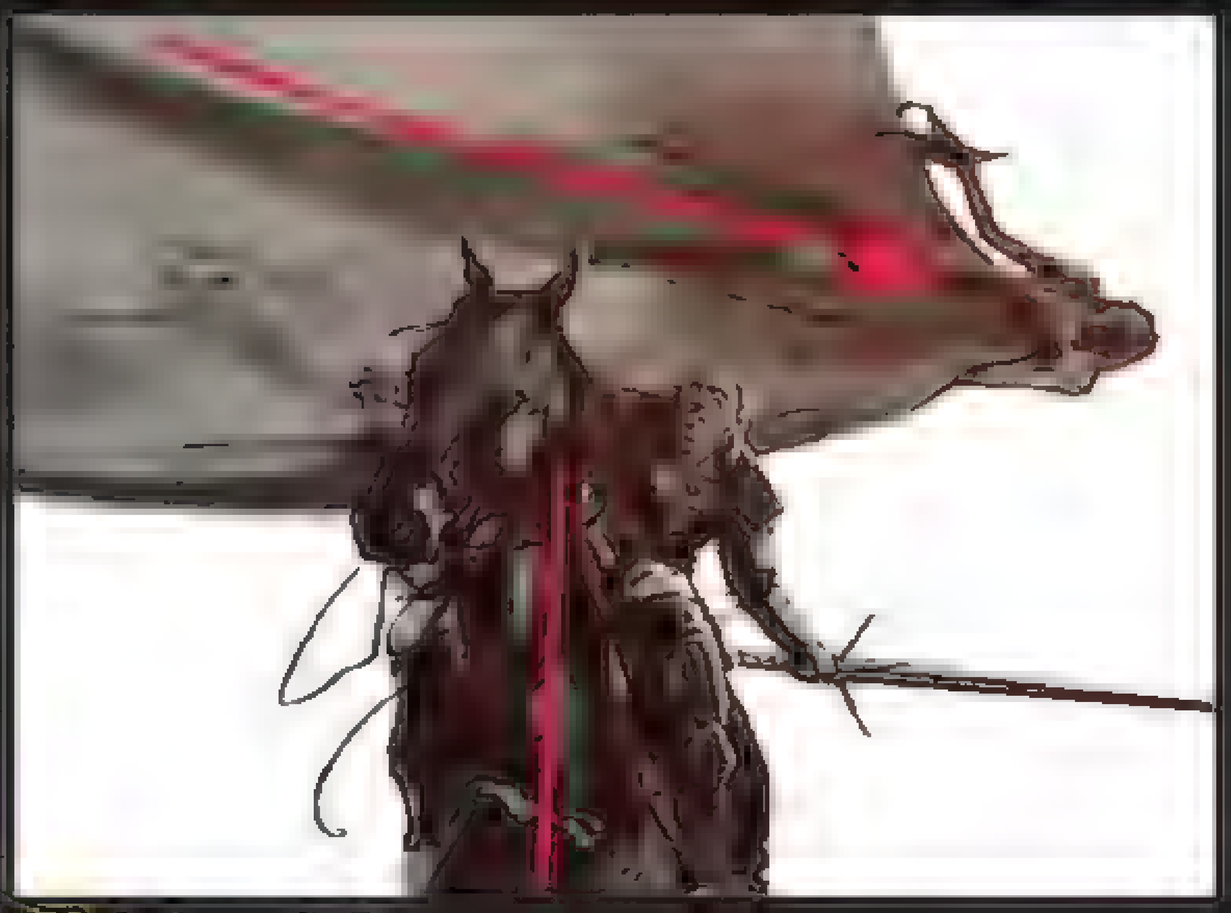


Storemags

1 Searching for inspiration

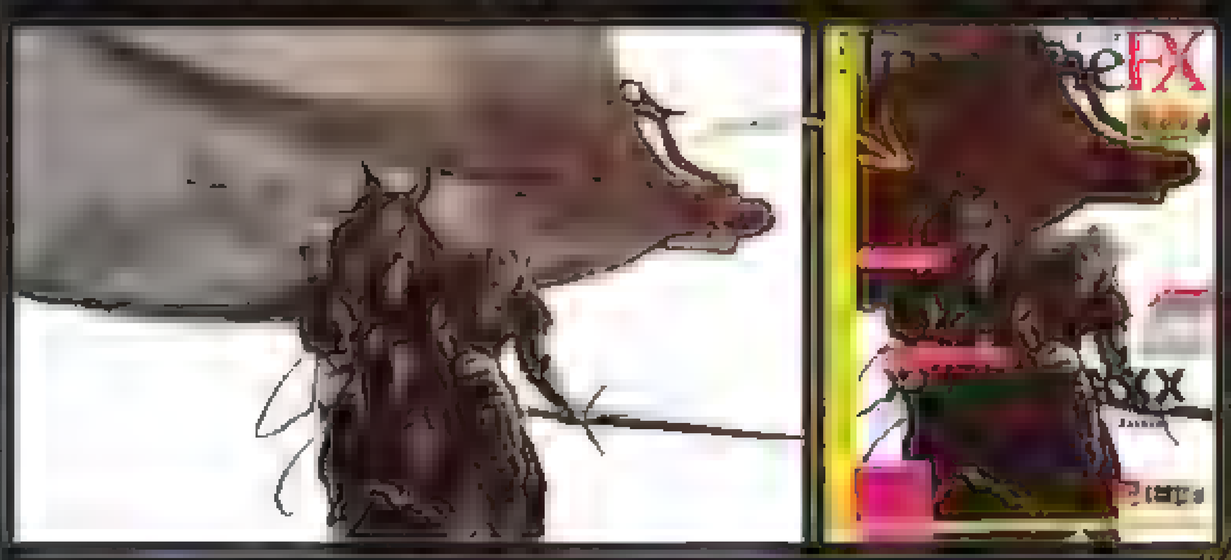
Before I start work on any illustration I always search for inspiration. It can be a film, a book, a photo – anything that enables me to understand the essence of the subject. So for this painting I read the script for The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt and brush up on the work of Polish fantasy writer Andrzej Sapkowski. I always think in terms of picture, framing and composition when I do my research. I imagine the picture as a 3D scene and mentally navigate it, looking for the best aspect to capture. When I'm happy with my choice, I start drawing. It's worth observing how camera operators and photographers compose their scenes. I always view movies or photos with this in mind.

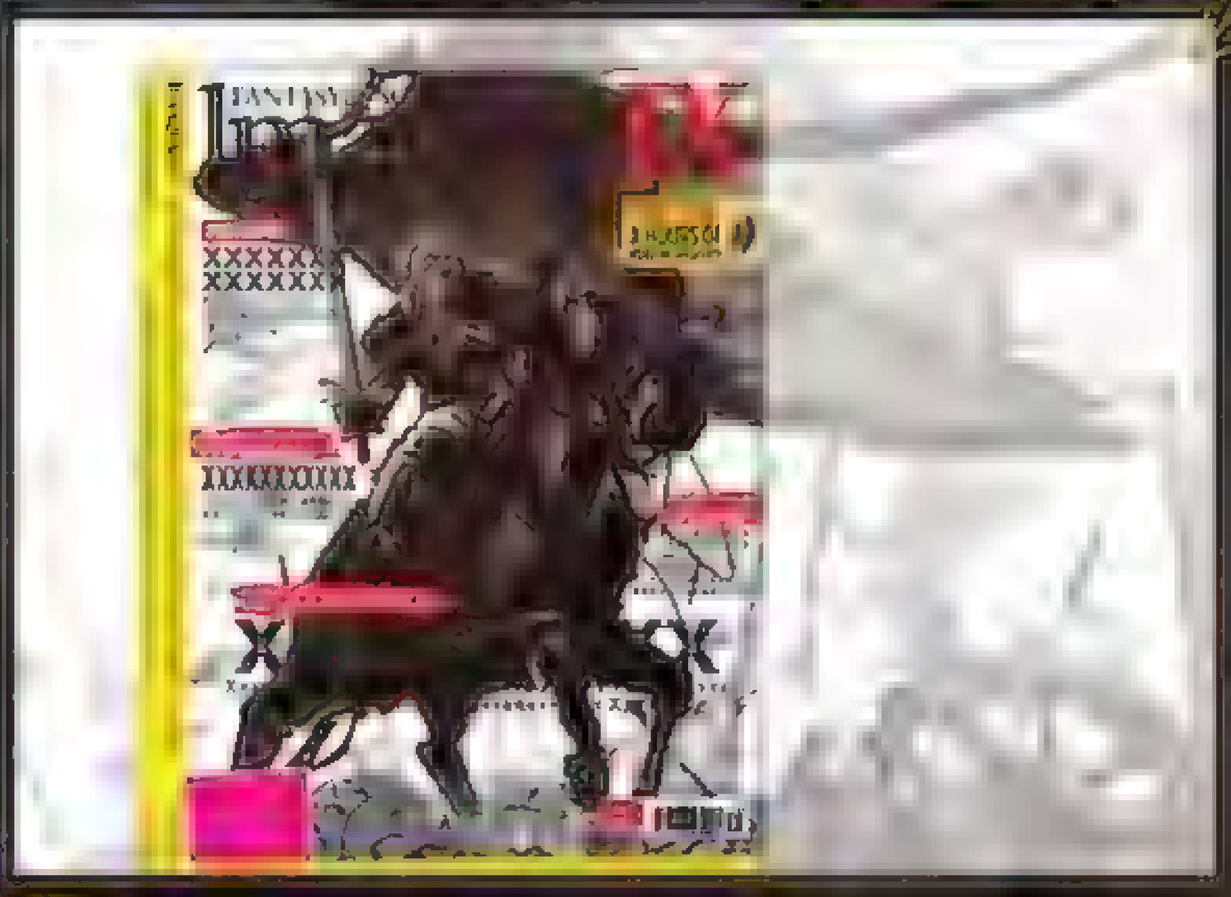




3 A dynamic frame

I like the composition of this scene a lot. The Witcher on horseback builds the vertical, while the siren crosses the frame with a dynamic diagonal line. I'm also very fond of its symbolism: the siren depicts evil, which intrudes into the frame and frames the picture with a dark curtain of wings. The idea for a dynamic frame is complete.





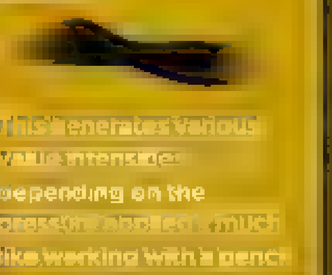
4 Finalising the composition

However, there are added complications because the illustration will be used as a magazine cover. When I place the picture in a mock layout for testing purposes it's clear the illustration doesn't work very well. Some elements are out of frame and need to be moved which, in turn, breaks the composition I'm going for. After some experiments and consultations with the ImagineFX team I create another version, which reveals the aftermath of a battle at the bottom of the picture. It's a compromise, but I really like the final arrangement of the elements.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES



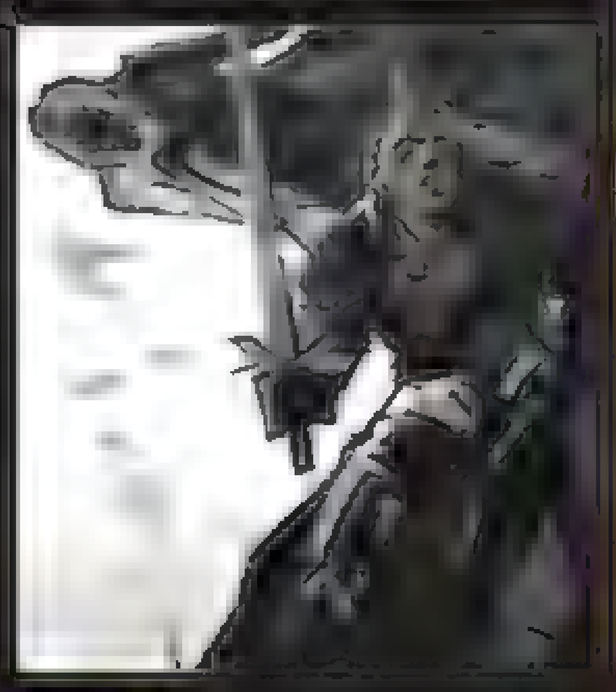
2 Sketching approach

I start with quick sketches. Sometimes, after just a moment, I know that an idea won't work. I try not to worry about this and continue until I find a satisfying angle. This is the most interesting stage of the art development but also perhaps the most stressful. There's no firm idea yet; expectations are high, deadlines are approaching and competition is huge. Because of this, making mistakes doesn't deter me; if a concept doesn't work I abandon it without regrets and look for something else. I like this stage of the development process. It gives me creative freedom and a lot of satisfaction. After some research, I have a clear vision of Geralt riding a horse with a siren in the background.



5 Refining elements

I decide to enlarge the illustration beyond the frame defined by the format (the black border marks the area of the final cover), because I want to save my initial idea for the composition with the siren in the background. At this stage the most important thing is refining the elements. I spend some time defining what's present in particular planes.



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PRO SECRETS

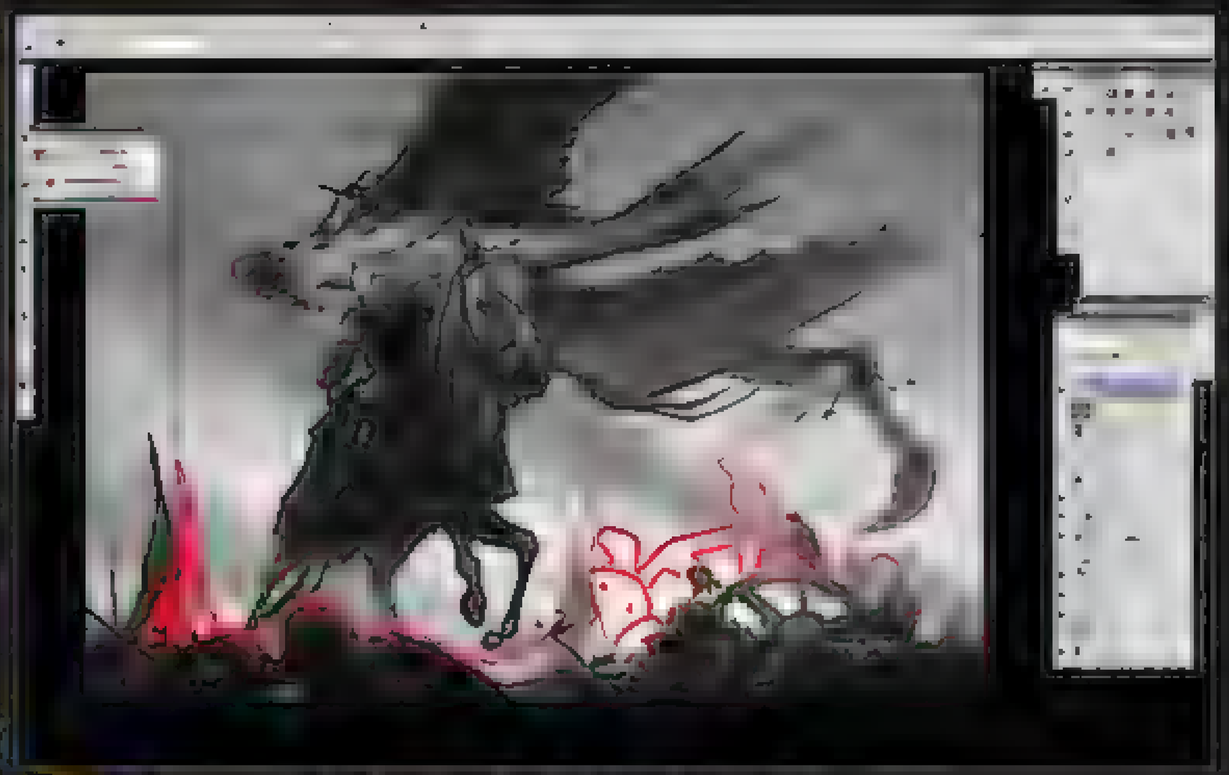
Flip your art

Flip your work vertically and horizontally regularly during the painting process. Mistakes that you'd otherwise overlook and will be difficult to fix quickly become apparent. To save time, consider setting up a couple of hotkeys to do this for you.

6 Adding components

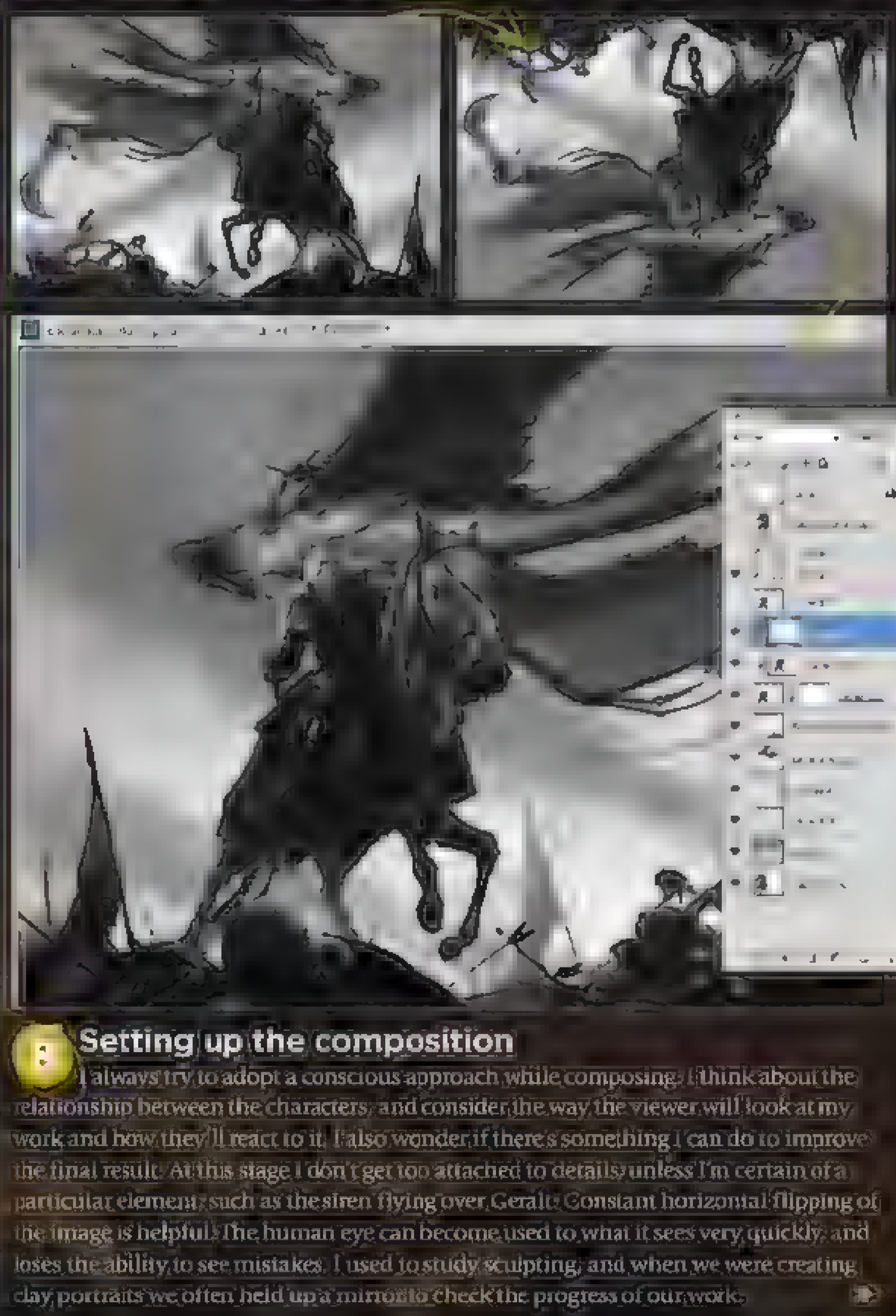
I add components to enrich the picture, such as a second siren in the background. New elements are introduced very carefully: I don't want to disturb the initial idea for the composition (the vertical Geralt, the horizontal siren). The additional siren in the second plane mimics the direction and arrangement of the horse. If I had set her up in a different angle, she would introduce confusion in the viewer's mind.





7 Adjusting elements in the scene

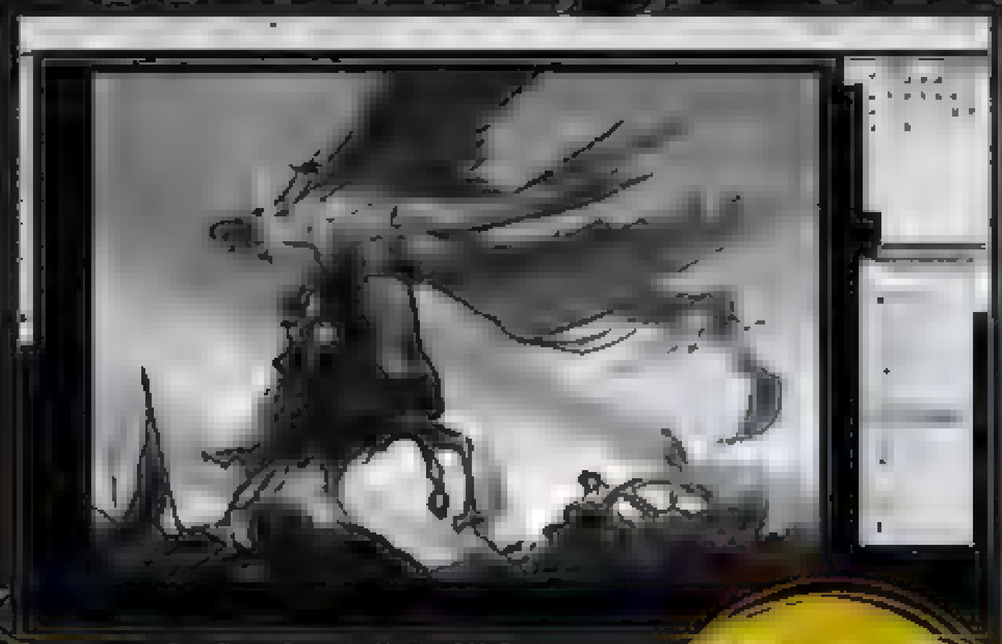
The dead bodies in the foreground create a barrier that separates the viewer from the most important person in the scene: our hero, Geralt. So I change their proportions and split the foreground into two planes. I shrink the characters on the right and move them so that they're behind the horse on a third plane. This adds depth to the image and clears a path for the horse. It's at this point that the ImagineFX team steps in and rearranges the painting's elements for the cover, so that the focus is on Geralt. However, they ask me to complete the image as per my original vision, which I'm happy to do.



8 Setting up the composition

I always try to adopt a conscious approach while composing. I think about the relationship between the characters, and consider the way the viewer will look at my work and how they'll react to it. I also wonder if there's something I can do to improve the final result. At this stage I don't get too attached to details, unless I'm certain of a particular element, such as the siren flying over Geralt. Constant horizontal flipping of the image is helpful. The human eye can become used to what it sees very quickly, and loses the ability to see mistakes. I used to study sculpting, and when we were creating clay portraits we often held up a mirror to check the progress of our work.

Storemags.com



1 Values and details

When I deem the composition nearly finished, I begin to work on the details and values. I use two or three brushes with alpha-containing tips. Alpha is really important to me, because I usually work with the brush set to 100 per cent Opacity. This enables me to create deep blacks whenever I press down with my stylus, as well as smooth value transitions. I work in black and white by pressing X to switch between the two – this allows smooth and precise work. I always use references when working with details. It's good to look for photos, illustrations and pictures so the art has some sort of connection with reality. All locations and characters in The Witcher 3 are created this way. The art team's inspiration is always taken from actual places and objects. So you won't find people wielding swords bigger than themselves in the game! During my work on this image the ImagineFX team tells me that the horse's head is too big. I was so accustomed to the bigger picture that I didn't notice. It's good to listen to feedback on your work, especially those relating to key forms and elements.



2 On to colouring

Okay, everything is ready and I'm set for the next stage: colouring. It's good to find a certain theme to take inspiration from. In this case, I'm using screenshots from The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt – Killing Monsters cinematic trailer. I like the colour scheme in this mini-movie very much: the cold, grey and depressing wintery scenes fits the subject perfectly. Of course, it's only a guide; you don't have to stick to your reference to the letter – just be careful not to be limited by it. When I apply colours I use the layer blending option set to Color. I also use brushes with high opacity, so I won't blur out the details that I put so much effort into earlier. I also work with the Dodge and Burn tool, set up to Shadows, Midtones or Highlights according to my needs. It's a very slow process. I add new values as needed systematically. If I haven't put details on an element at the black and white stage, I do it now. I'm constantly using a 100 per cent Opacity brush. I care about colour now as much as I was concerned about the values earlier.

PRO SECRETS



3 Using masks to add values

I press Ctrl+Alt, hover my mouse pointer over the space between the layers and click. The lower layer becomes a mask of the upper one. I can now draw without worrying about keeping within the outline. I'm still working on the values, so I arrange the elements in relation to each other and ask myself what can be improved. Working with values this way enables me to differentiate between bright and dark elements of the picture. I believe the value is more important than colour. Having a colourful artwork is nothing if it's under- or overexposed. Working with black and white causes you to focus on the value and the chiaroscuro only, so when I apply the colours I don't lose the contrast (the belly of the siren and rest of her body).



4 Final touches

While working with colours I try to give the picture a final look. I use Hue/Saturation, Color Balance and Selective Color adjustment layers. In the end, I apply a Gradient Map with blending options set to Soft Light. It boosts the colours and blends them together. Thanks to my meticulous approach to the image in the early stages applying colours is quick and easy. I can focus on the differences between colours without being concerned about the value. It's easier to control lights and shadows at the stage of sketching by using this method. And here is my final painting.



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Artist insight

SCI-FI WEAPON DESIGN ADVICE

Brian Sum scores a bull's-eye with this great collection of tips for concepting iconic and impactful sci-fi weapons for video games

Artist PROFILE

Brian Sum

COUNTRY: Canada



Brian is a concept artist based in Montreal, Quebec. His previous projects include Mass Effect 2 and 3, Dragon Age Origins, Sonic Chronicles and Shadowrun. Brian's currently working on the next game in the Mass Effect franchise.

www.brianstim.com

When I play shooters, there's nothing like the feeling of acquiring the perfect weapon to take down your enemy. Everyone has their own personal favourites. It could be the sniper rifle that can hit a target with pinpoint accuracy, or it could be the shotgun that rips an enemy to shreds. Its accuracy, how it sounds, the reload time... everything plays into the overall experience. Players want to feel bad-ass when using the gun, so naturally the gun should look bad-ass, too.

Cool-looking weapons can come in all shapes and sizes, but some themes remain consistent. Over the past few years I've had the opportunity to design some of the weapons for the Mass Effect franchise. I've come to realise that some basic design principles are universal and apply to weapon design as much as they do for character design and environment art. The Rule of Thirds, composition and creating unique silhouettes are just some principles to keep in mind when trying to create a successful design.

In this workshop, I'll describe some of these principles a little further, as well as offering some of my own tricks that I've picked up over the years.

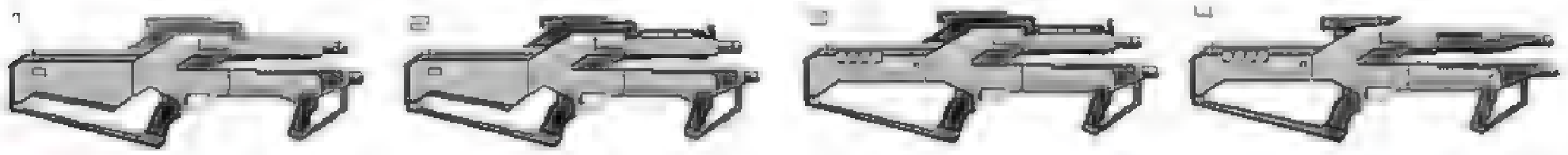
1 SPECS AND REQUIREMENTS

Before starting the design, it's important to gather all necessary information about the gun from the game's designers, such as the type of weapon it is (assault rifle, shotgun, compact pistol and so on), where the hands need to be, or the maximum allowable size of the gun. Are there moving parts when the gun fires? Does the gun require an ammo slot? Is there a specific alien race that this gun is designed for? What's the backstory of this gun? All these points are important to keep in mind and serve as the boundaries to work within when concepting the weapon.





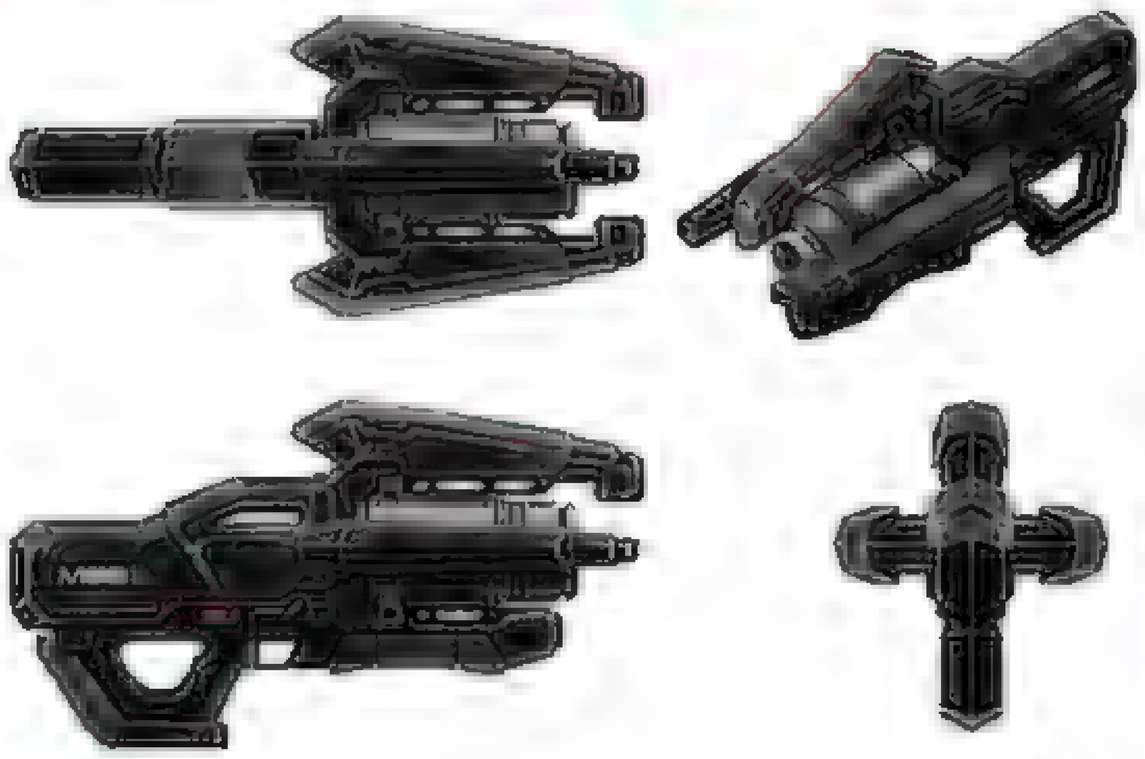




2 RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH

Gather as much reference material as possible, both to serve as inspiration and also to see what's already been done before, so that you don't design something too similar to an existing weapon. Studying real-world weapons gives you a better understanding of how guns should function. Research for made-up weapons gives you an idea of how far others have pushed their designs. In general, the goal is to be as original as possible.

> Studying real-world weapons gives you a better understanding of how guns should function



3 DESIGN FROM ALL ANGLES

Think in three-dimensional space, and design from all angles. Although I've only shown the profile view in the majority of my weapon concepts, a lot of work has been done to design the weapons from every aspect. It's important to design from all perspectives, especially from the player's view, because this is what you would see the most in-game. Focus on creating an interesting silhouette from a range of views.

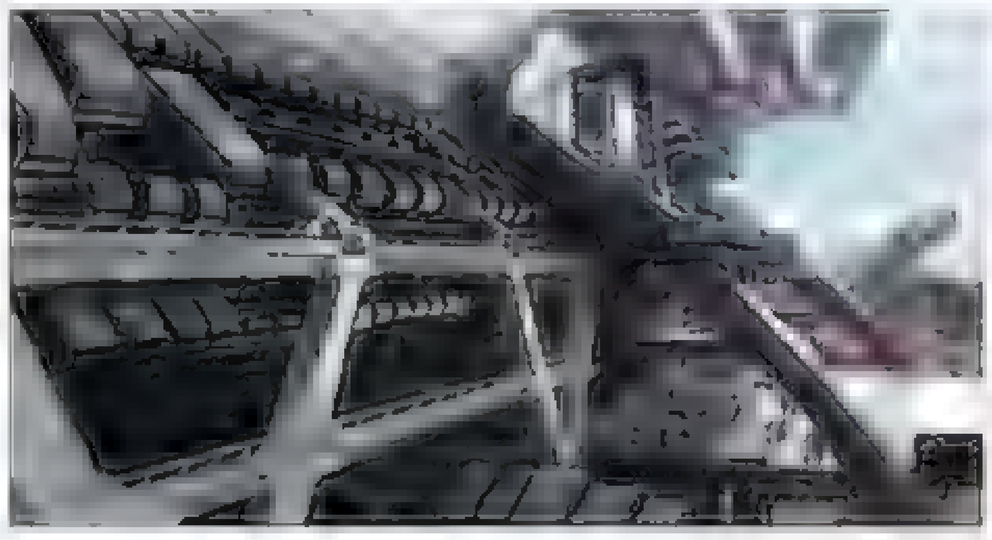
4 START WITH THUMBNAILS

I start off by doing simple thumbnails in greyscale with just a simple Round brush at 100 per cent Opacity. No shading or colour – just a light, medium and dark tone. At this stage I'm concerned purely with the shape of the design and the relationship between the different tones. The focus is on silhouettes and the big broader shapes. By producing these thumbnails, I'm trying to capture the main essence of the design at this early point in the design process.



5 FIND A THEME

Sometimes you'll find opportunities to continue an existing theme for a design. Here, the repeating chrome parts from the Quarian architecture served as a strong theme to implement in the shotgun. Each alien race has their own specific styles and it was important that we showed that in the weapons. »

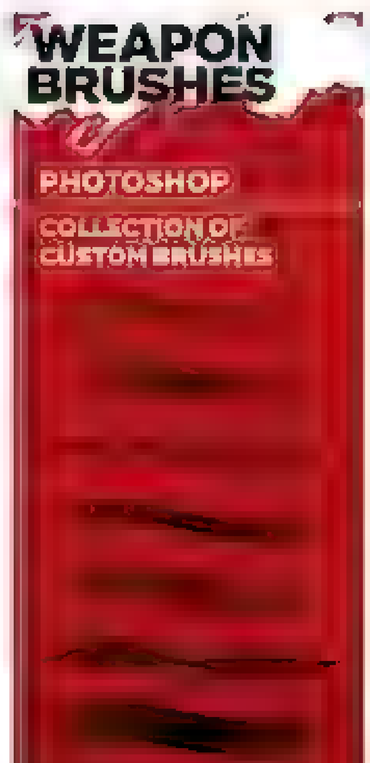




6 COMPOSITION IS KEY

Unless the weapon's design requires a series of repeating shapes, I try not to space out details evenly across the weapon, which tends to create a boring design. Instead I apply the Rule of Thirds by placing detail elements a third of the distance from a specific part of the weapon. This works vertically, horizontally and diagonally. Leaving areas empty helps balance out all the detailed parts of the weapon.





The brushes were used mostly in the texturing phase. Scratches and dirt effects were either painted on a separate layer or painted on a mask.

7 CONSIDER FLOW IN YOUR DESIGN

Because the Mass Effect style has more of a clean and sleek design about it, it's important to pay attention to the flow of the design elements. I try to continue lines and seams to maintain the clean, streamlined feel.

8 FLIP THE CANVAS

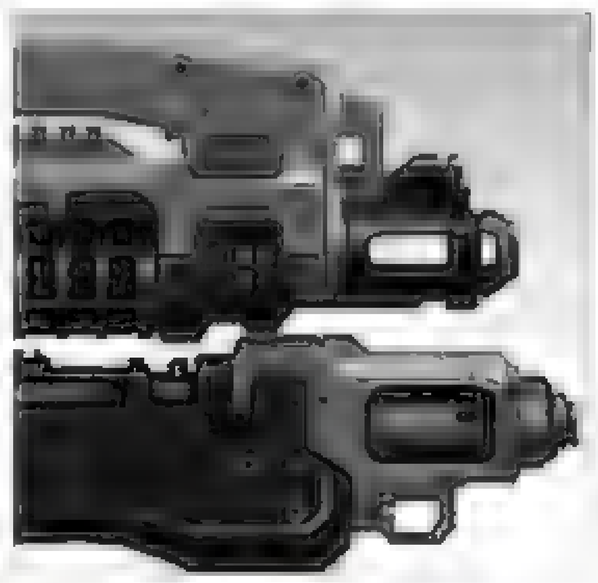
Flip your canvas regularly during the concepting process to help solve composition problems. Seeing the design from another angle enables you to see things differently and find new solutions to the design. To do this in Photoshop choose File and then select Image>Image Rotation>Flip Canvas Horizontal. Considering assigning a hotkey for this.

9 COLOUR AND COMPOSITION

At this point it's good to start adding colour to the design and see how it affects the composition. It's interesting how a slight colour shift from a dark tone to a light tone can totally change the weapon's design and flow. I usually like to use one dominant colour along with one or two accent colours. Adding too many colours tends to end up with them competing with each other while adding a neutral tone complements the main colour nicely.

10 ADD DETAIL

This is the fun stuff. Now that the main design is fleshed out, it's time to start adding the extra bevels, seams, nuts and bolts. This is where the weapon starts to come to life. I'll paint with an airbrush when I want to indicate soft, curved surfaces. For sharp corners and edges I'll use a thin, simple Round brush to paint in those white highlights. I'll also use an airbrush set to Color Dodge when I want to give the surface a metallic shine. This process requires the most time and focus, but all the hard work painting those small bolts and thin seams pays off in the end.





11 ADD TEXTURES

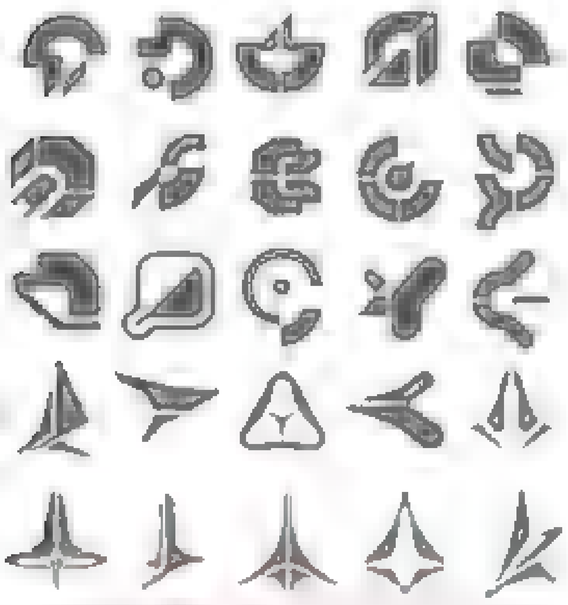
Textures give the weapon an added level of detail and help differentiate parts that may have appeared the same before. For example, the black rubber handle now looks different from the grey metallic body of the gun. Add highlights to give it that shiny quality. You can sell what type of material it is by playing around with the level of diffuse and specularity. The more shiny the material, the more concentrated the highlight should be, and the more spread out the highlight, the more matt the finish will look. I like to add a scratch texture to give it a banged-up feel. I also apply a mask on the texture and paint in where the scratches should be.



> I use a lens flare texture set to the Color Dodge blend mode to add highlights to shiny surfaces

12 USE A LENS FLARE TEXTURE

I like to use a lens flare texture set to the Color Dodge blend mode to add highlights to shiny surfaces, or the glowing lights common in the Mass Effect weapons. This adds a level of vibrancy to the weapon. The glowing stripes also make a weapon feel sci-fi.



13 ADD FUTURISTIC LOGOS AND DECALS

The Mass Effect style usually involves adding logos, numbers and stripes throughout the weapon. This gives it an added visual flair and also gives the impression that these weapons were made by different manufacturers.

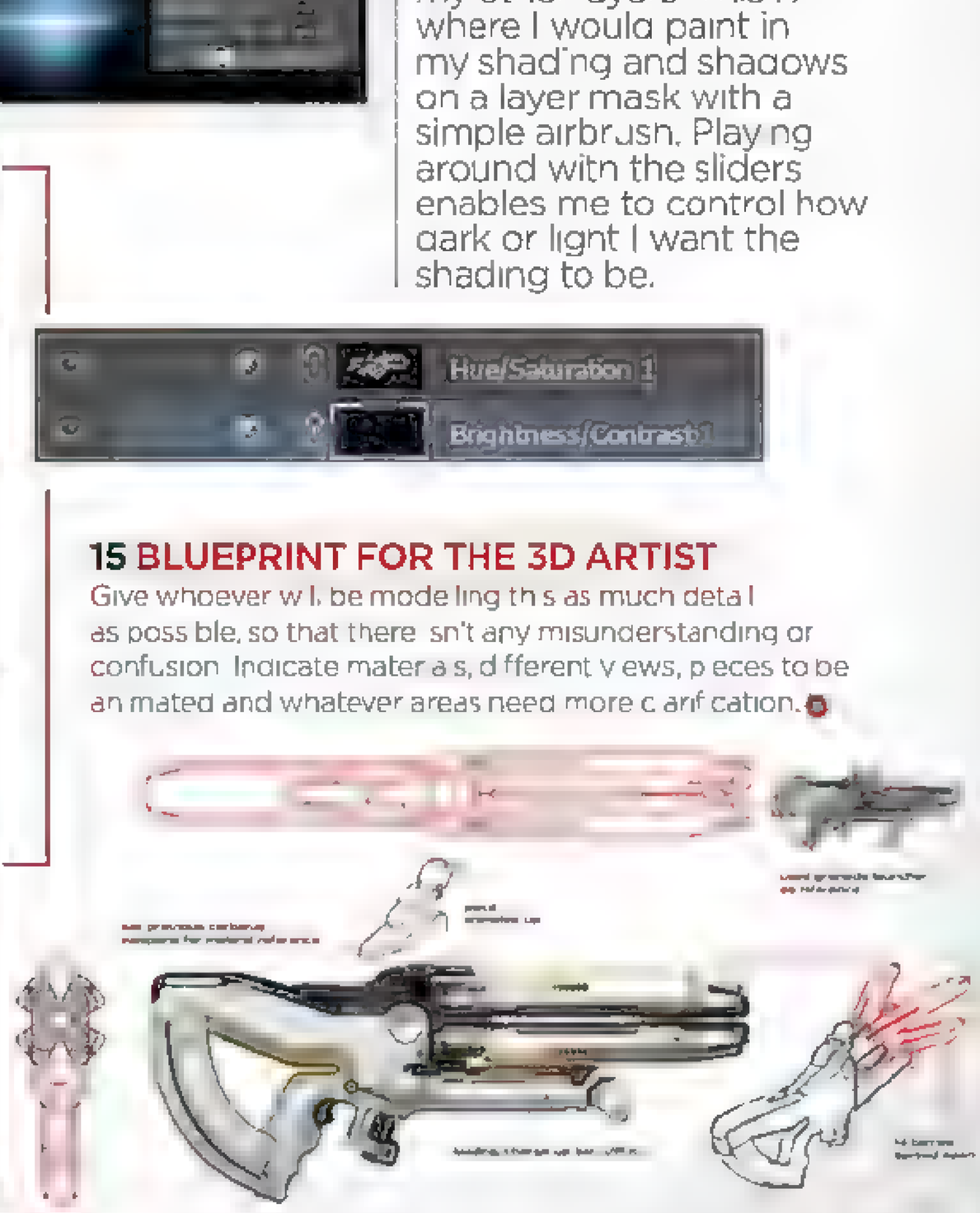


14 SHADING FOR VOLUME

I'll usually have a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer and a Brightness/Contrast layer placed on top of all my other layers. This is where I would paint in my shading and shadows on a layer mask with a simple airbrush. Playing around with the sliders enables me to control how dark or light I want the shading to be.

15 BLUEPRINT FOR THE 3D ARTIST

Give whoever will be modelling this as much detail as possible, so that there isn't any misunderstanding or confusion. Indicate materials, different views, pieces to be animated and whatever areas need more clarification.





Photoshop

CREATE A MONSTER FOR THE MOVIES

Anthony Scott Waters designs monsters for a living. Here, he reveals how to instantly convey ideas and story in a single piece of concept art

Artist PROFILE

Anthony Scott Waters

COUNTRY: US



DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES

What's the most important part of creating any sort of design the draftsmanship, or the painting of it? Chops matter, don't get me wrong, but my workshop will focus on the process of ideation and idea generation more than technique. This is a crucial part of the design process that ought to be front and centre every time you approach a new task.

Let's take a stab at developing one of the creatures from Norse mythology for the next instalment for the Thor or Avengers movie. We're going to use Jörmungandr, the Midgard Serpent, as our subject, and shape him to fit the existing films' style. That means we'll be analysing the look of Kenneth Branagh's Thor and Joss Whedon's Avengers. I'll show you how I utilise reference and make choices that lead to a finished creature design.

The first thing we do is breakdown the look of the previous films. The people of Asgard have a high aesthetic clearly in place. Call it super-tech translated through skilled craftsmen, with just enough of the Marvel style to keep the fans happy. The Chitauri are the only beings we've seen who employ creatures of any kind. It's possible he came from the same stock as the Leviathan, but the mythology says Jörmungandr is Loki's child. Let's run with the idea that Loki either found Jörmungandr or made him during his time among the Chitauri.

Human perception catalogues the world in terms of shape and silhouette. That's where we're going to start. »

1 Gathering reference

Here's how I set things up when going fully digital. I keep the reference I like best distributed around my blank file. This encourages me to avoid zooming in and noodling. (Noodling's fine when you're drawing for fun, but when you've got a job to do, noodling is right out.)

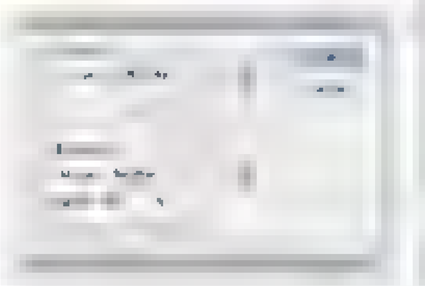


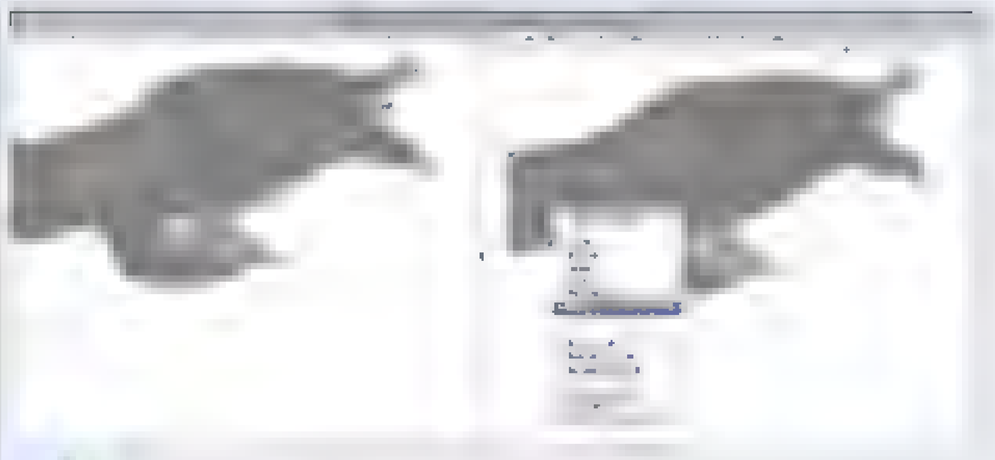
PRO SECRETS

Create rough 'n' ready art



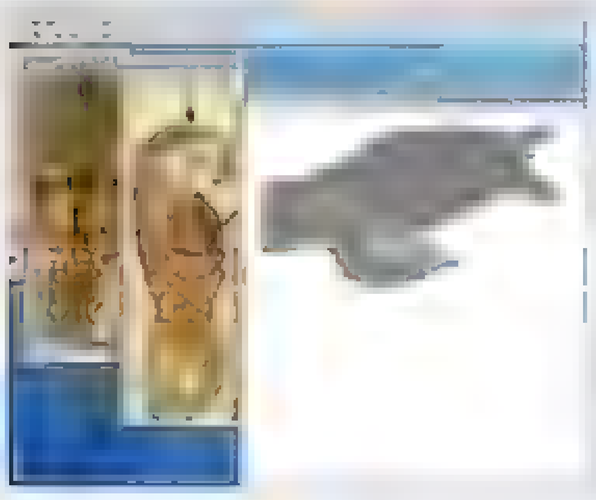






2 Playing around

I might as well start with Jörmungandr's head. That's the part of him our audience is going to care about the most, right? My best friends at this point in the creative process are Photoshop's Selection tools and Selection Fill. These tools keep me from getting caught up in detail. A clear and interesting silhouette is a must for any good design – this has to come first



3 It's the Blob!

I'm riffing on the idea expressed in the ancient art to the left of my workspace, where the Midgard Serpent is depicted with a human-like set of arms and the face of a bearded ox. I must choose the animal attributions I carry forward carefully. They need to be appropriate for the design. How do you justify putting forelegs on a snake-like thing? Look to Mother Nature and see how she does it.

4 Bend me, shape me

I am a big fan of the Warp tool. It's great for minor adjustments to finish a piece or, as in this case, for twisting one design into the foundation for something completely different



5 Roll call

These six silhouettes are reasonably different from each other The top tier are variants on the idea that Jörmungandr's got forelimbs. The middle two play more to the notion that he's not a living creature but a machine, the left-hand design being more hi-tech, the right resembling an old-school Norse engraving. At the bottom are a mechanical with fused teeth on the left and a Midgard Serpent that could be part giant snake, part humpback whale on the right

6 A little polish, then produce a shortlist

I'm now up to ten iterations of my movie monster. I've gone over each design and tried to push them away from each other, to help my the decision process that bit easier. Some of my concepts are more successful than others. It's time to pick a few candidates, go for a full silhouette and take the designs further.



7 Decisions, decisions

What's the story? Great designs come from the story behind the design, not from pursuing something so elusive as what would make it look 'cool'. In the absence of a story, make one up! That's how you figure out what reference to search for and how to use it ..

I bring in a ruppi reference to design a different kind of mouth-gape from that of a fish or reptile. Check out those rasks.



All the designs on this page treat Jörmungandr as a living creature. Non-animal reference is used for the sake of patterns and motifs (head scutes, for example). I use the idea of the Magnus serpent waving tentacles so much, I use it three times. It's not without precedent in nature.



I choose to use a gaping mouth on two of my designs for the menace it conveys (just picture a shark, toothy maw and you've eaten my arm!)







I borrow the clunky roundness of the Anglerfish's head and its expansive mouth to create a design that feels more dragon like, but still alien.

Like the elongated skull and tusks, as I look for references of real creatures that have a lower physiology: crocodiles, snakes and certain fish.





Contour whale head shape to a serpent's body to approximate the feel of a giant eel.

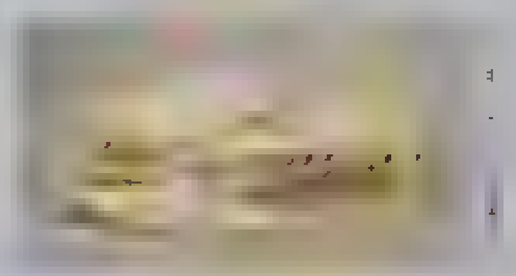


Legs become wings or flippers in this design. Now he's got a little Quetzalcoatl in him.

This version of Jörmungandr has the biggest mouth of all, courtesy of some gulper eel inspiration.



A humpback whale's huge lower jaw with a snake's head on this design. Could it maybe swallow a gigantic bird whole?



8 Audience reaction

Theme and variation works as a principle for art as well as in music. Your character's head and face need to be as catchy and visually persistent as a good hook. Consider HR Giger's Alien and note how the rest of its body echoes the shapes and patterns defined on the head. Don't simply think of the body in terms of anatomy. Think of how you want us to react to the creature.





9 Three serpents

I've made my choice. The version that's got a head like a ball of meat and muscle is going to be my version of Jörmungandr. It's time to make full-scale silhouettes and continue refining until I've got a head and a body that I like.





10 From head to tail

Jörmungandr is referred to as being a serpent, but in archaic language this means dragon, and dragons can fly. How he gets about has a huge effect on his silhouette. I've chosen three possible directions. The first flies with a sidewinder's motion (top); the second would fly like a Spanish dancer (middle); and number three's legs could transform into flippers, showing his kinship with the Leviathans.



11 How big is he?

Don't forget to put a figure in your pieces so that the viewer has a means of determining scale. My version of Jörmungandr comes across as a whole lot bigger once you notice the teeny tiny sacrificial human on the lower right. This may seem like a tiny thing (pun intended), but it's a necessity that's easily overlooked.



12 Jörmungandr, meet Gamera

I really like the idea of keeping a powerful set of forelegs on Jörmungandr. The challenge of making a cheesy concept appear cool appeals to me. It ties in to a common depiction of the Midgard Serpent, and that can't be bad. As I work on the design, however, I find myself thinking of the multi-limbed horses I'd seen depicted in Norse mythology. I give Jörmungandr a sturdier chassis and decide it fits.



13 Hit the afterburners

Here's why I like to work with the Lasso tool and in greyscale before I get to painting, because once I do get painting, things move fast. My values have already been defined and are now bundled with my design work. I'm using textures to generate surface noise, and then painting over the top of them on a separate layer



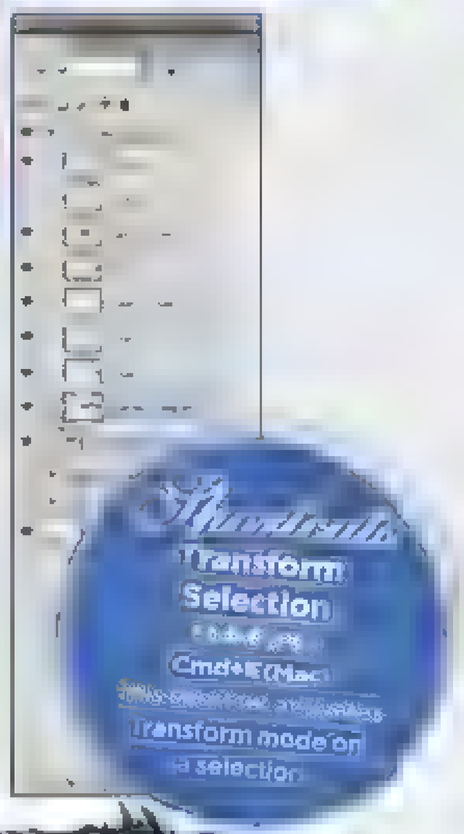
14 Pump up the volume

Too much of my value range is near the middle. Time to increase the contrast. I combine my previous reference and painting layers into one by going to the topmost layer, hitting Cmd+A (Select All), then going to the Edit drop-down and selecting Edit>Copy Merged. This takes a snapshot of all the layers combined. Hit Cmd+V and BOOM! That snapshot is now on a layer of its own.

PRO SECRETS

Stay on top of things

Make use of Photoshop's indexing functions for your files. Grouping related Layers, naming and even colour-coding them prevents precious minutes being lost searching through 50-layer files for the one you set to Overlay, two hours ago.





15 Mom, can I keep him?

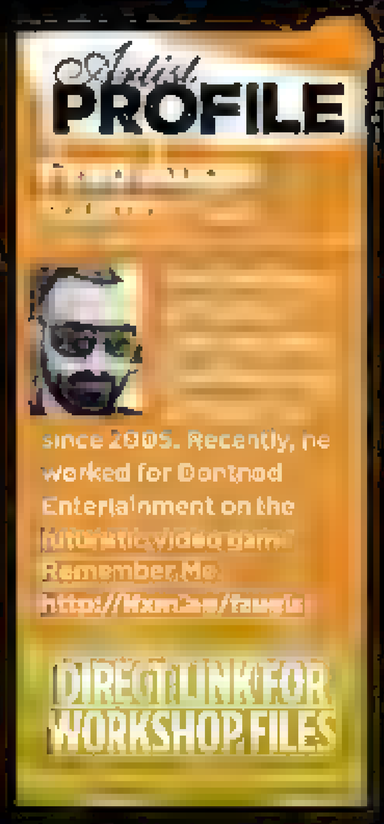
We've reached the end. I've not rendered out every detail but that's not necessarily what you'd do for a concept. Once the idea's given the green light, chances are I'd be asked to produce a fully rendered production painting, but until then it's all about getting the ideas out on pixels. A good rule of thumb: is the detail critical to understanding the design? If yes, then render it, if not, let it go.



Photoshop

DESIGN A VIDEO GAME OPPONENT

Fred Augis worked on the video game Remember Me, and here he describes the thinking behind this concept of a lethal robotic adversary



Artist PROFILE

since 2005. Recently, he worked for Dontnod Entertainment on the futuristic video game Remember Me.
http://www.2se.com/fauguis

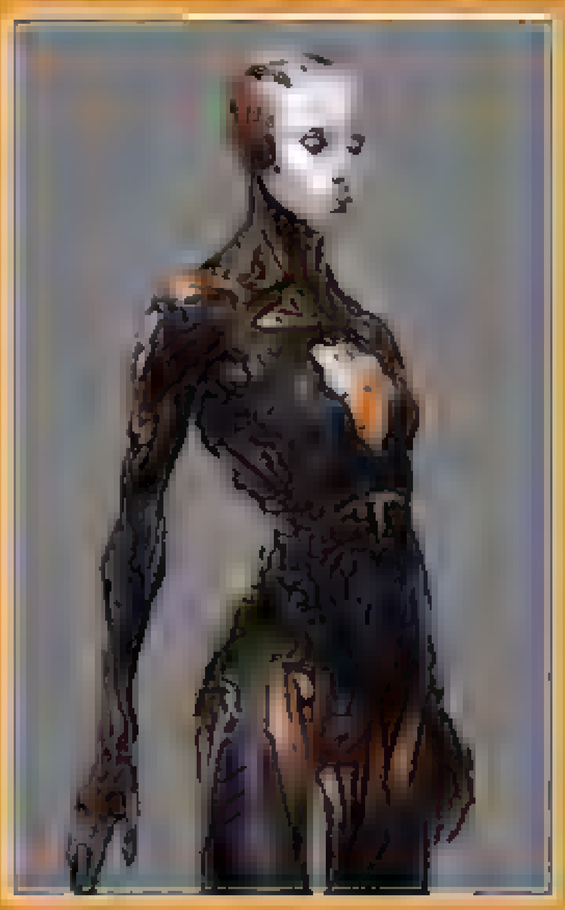
DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES

My role on the game Remember Me involves the creation of art concepts. These characters are designed in close collaboration with the art directors.

The constraints of the game's universe means that this concept art is set in the near future, so there has to be a clear connection with the present day. It's a tricky balance to strike: the art can't be too realistic, and yet it also requires some elements of fantasy – but without crossing the line into space opera. I'll explain some steps of the creative process that I use for this enemy, who must stop our heroin Nilin during the fight stages.

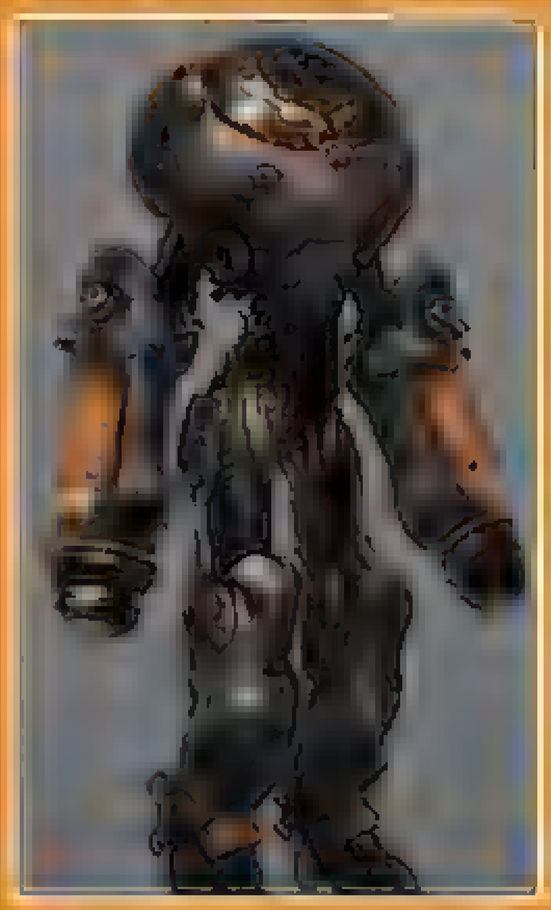
There are two key requirements for this concept. The game designers are looking for a weapon that's capable of causing heavy damage to any characters caught in the blast radius, like the explosion from a tank round. The second requirement is related to the credibility of an industrial production that produces a hostile derivative of the civilian Valet android, resulting in the Nephilim and the Seraphim robots. We want to create a logical link between the robots, and save time during the concept art pipeline. Let's see how we get on!

AN AGGRESSIVE ANDROID



1 Pre-conversion

The starting point is the conversion of an android used to help people in their daily lives into a deadly military body. The original design of the Valet is defined as an androgynous or asexual bot – a skinned character that must have an elegant and peasant appearance.



2 Weaponise

The next stage involves transforming this harmless machine into a brutal weapon. So it's essential to give it more stature – although I'll keep its slim waist and legs – and to remove the head. This helps to dehumanise the Valet because it's unable to express itself via facial expressions.



3 Bulk it out

The last step is to give to the Nephilim a sense of heaviness and aggressiveness through the use of metallic materials and angular shapes. I add visible volume to the concept so that the player will immediately recognise this bot as being a danger to the game's lead character.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES



This brush is a good tool to make rough calligraphic shapes.



This rectangular brush enables me to draw accurately and lay down

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Elements

The addition of logos on weapons and technical objects is an important factor in creating an effective design. Beyond the fact that it's focus the player's attention, it also helps to tell the object's history and function. Here, the use of an explosion symbol hints at the bot's deadly nature.



Artificial lights

Usually when creating sci-fi character designs, the temptation is to put lots of light sources on the body. This visual cue instantly says 'futuristic', but do this with care. There's a danger of overwhelming the concept with generic, illegible designs.

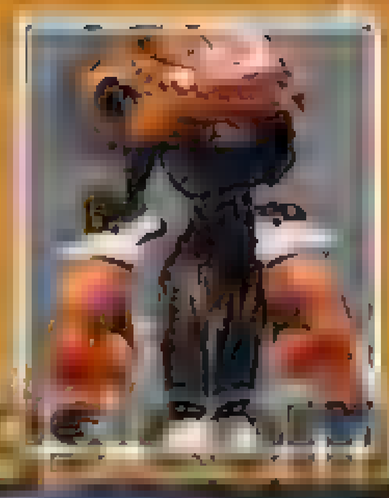
Collaboration

This concept takes a little time before we reach the final version. In fact, the first draft was a long away from the final. Between these two iterations, private discussions with the artistic directors about the gameplay, the aesthetic and the technical criteria of this robot in the game, the realisation of this kind of work is the fruit of a professional collaboration.



Photographs in concept art

Using photographic elements is essential to give a credible look to art concepts that incorporate realistic universes. The important thing is to create a unique design that is wholly detached from its source. And as small as it is, it should serve a coherent purpose.



Artist insight

BREAKING INTO THE GAMES INDUSTRY

Hugo Martin, id Software's art director, offers some advice on two key areas: what you need to learn and how to make your portfolio stand out

Artist PROFILE

Hugo Martin

COUNTRY: US



Hugo's a 10-year industry veteran in the games and films industry. He's worked at Blur Studios, Naughty Dog on Pacific Rim and is now the art director at id Software. www.hugomartin.net

You've made the decision to pursue a career as a concept artist in the gaming industry. This is your life's dream... so where do you start?

My aim here is to help you make better choices along the way. Everyone has their own ideas about preparing for and breaking into the gaming industry, and they're all valid. These are some tips that have worked for me.

I've written this article with the beginner to mid-level artist in mind. I'll assume that this person has yet to break into the industry, or hasn't gone to college yet and is deciding on which art program to get into – or whether they should attend college at all. I'll try to focus on the principles and ideas that, in my years in the industry, have mattered the most. I hope you'll find this information helpful.

TRAINING ADVICE

A formal art education will help, whether you're young or old

WHEN SHOULD YOU ENROL AT ART COLLEGE?

Your early 20s is the best time to spend between four and five uninterrupted years laying down the foundation for your art career. However, it's never too late to start. Just because you're older doesn't mean you should shy away from attending a bachelor's programme, but I'd do it sooner rather than later.

If you spend your time wisely, are focused going in and know what it is you want to do when you graduate, then you have a better chance of walking out of the school after four years with the potential to land the type of job you really want, without having to make any compromises. You'll benefit from your early education for the rest of your career.

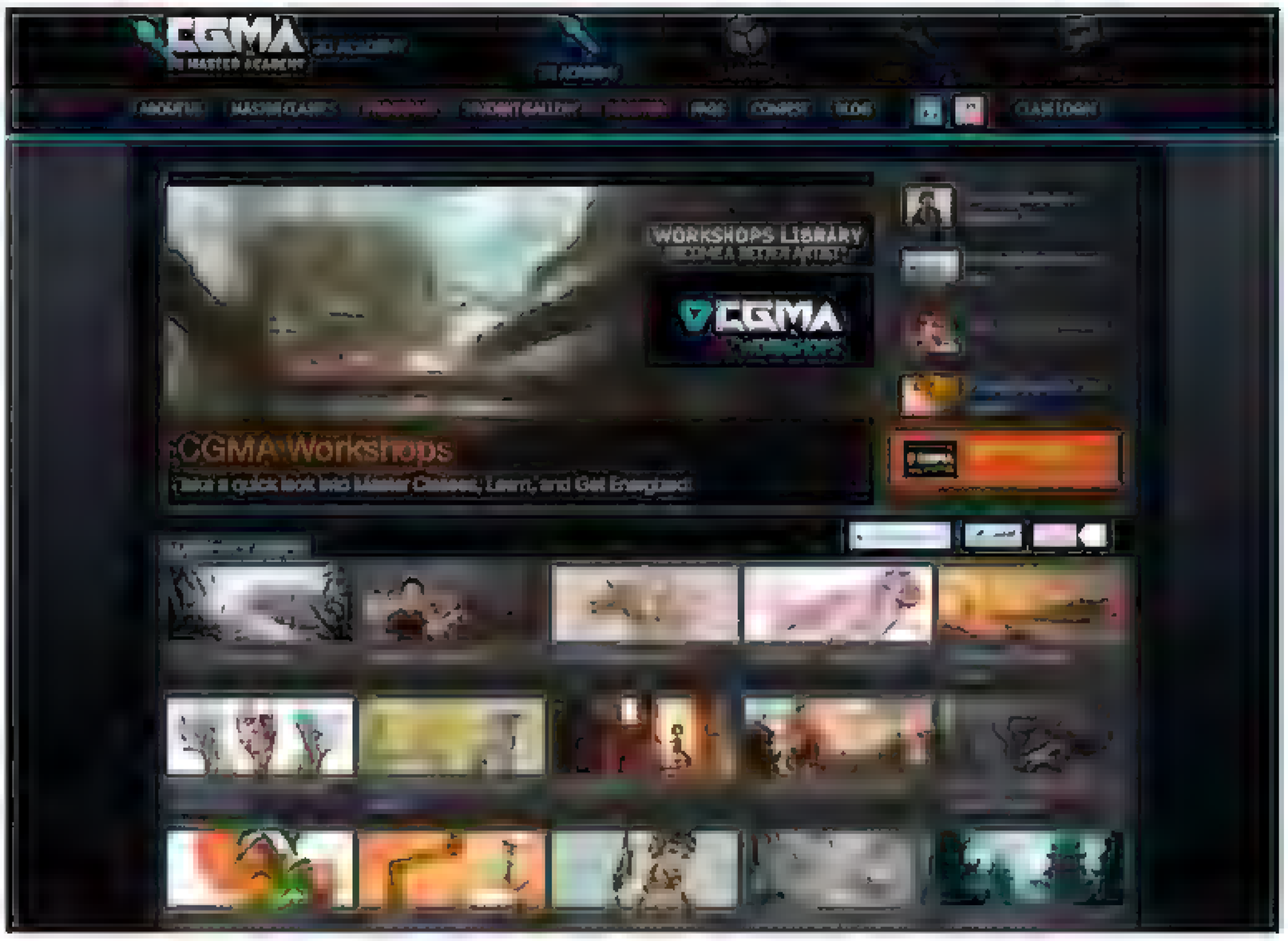


WHICH ART COLLEGE SHOULD YOU JOIN?

There are a lot of great art schools out there, so when considering which school to attend, I'd look into its location first and if there are any game studios in the local vicinity. Any school in California is usually pretty strong for game design. Numerous game studios are located in the Golden State and so some faculties may be working at the places you hope to apply to. There may be alumni connections, too.

If possible, find out how many recent graduates from that school are working in the industry today. Art Center has a high success rate of students moving into the industry after or sometimes even before graduation. This is usually a sign of a successful program.

> **Find out how many recent graduates from that school are working in the industry today**

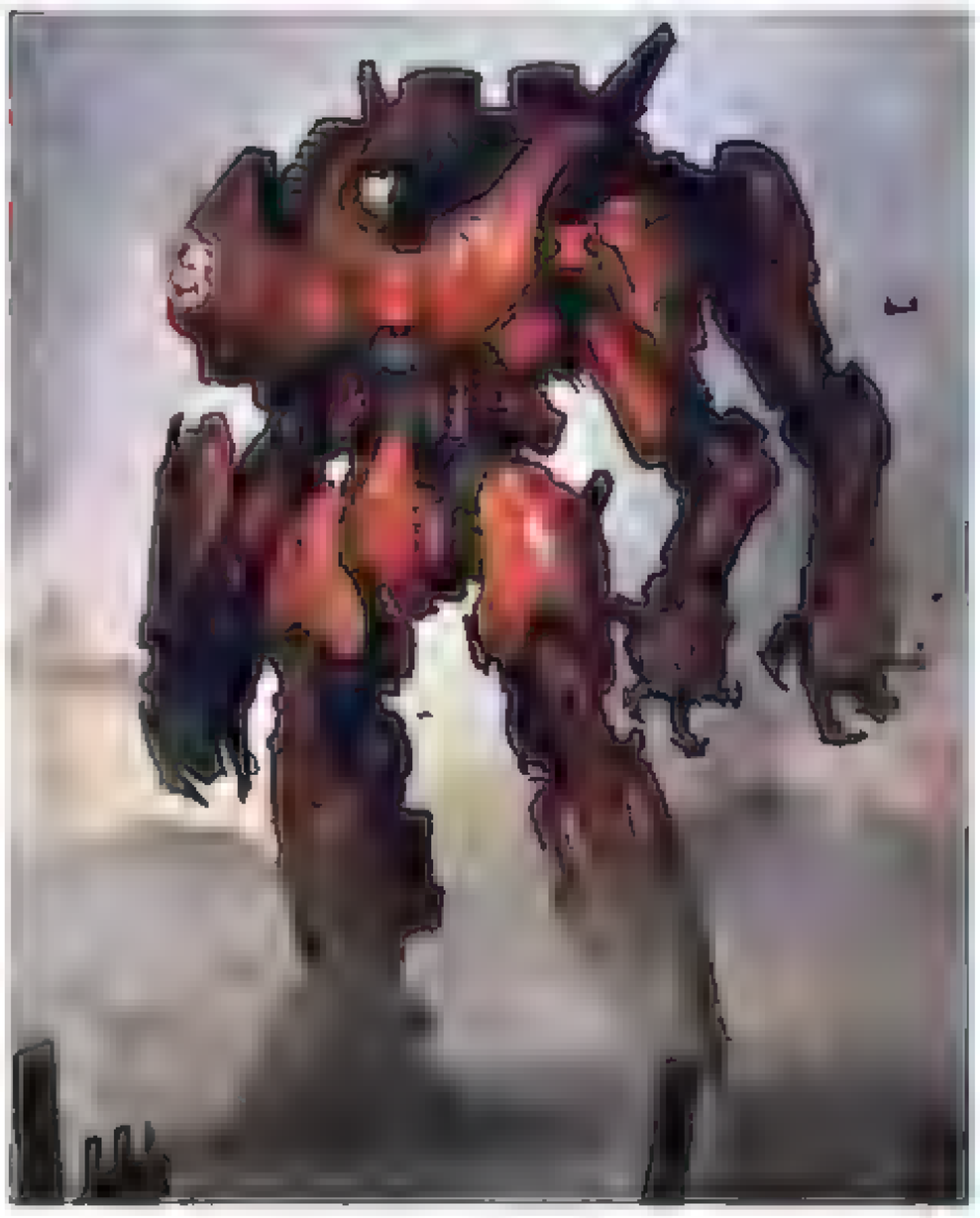


SHOULD YOU CONTINUE YOUR ART EDUCATION?

All the top artists in the business today work on their craft, learning new tools or refining old ones with additional training. Some of the prime resources would be CDA in Pasadena, a top-flight private school focusing on foundational and entertainment design training. I attend classes there often myself. Los Angeles Academy of Figurative Art is a great place to take classes. Gnomon is another top resource. I've taught classes there and online training is available, too. CGMA online training is spectacular – it's ideal for anyone who's not on America's West coast. Digital Tutors' online courses are great for learning 3D software packages.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON WHILE AT COLLEGE?

Study the fundamentals of art and design: life drawing, anatomy, perspective, industrial design, the basics of light, colour and composition. The media that we use to make art will change all the time, but the design principals we need to understand to make great art haven't changed since the time of the Renaissance. The ideas I use to make my compositions stronger are some of the same ones Norman Rockwell used while working on his paintings (he just applied them better!). Yes, work on your higher-end programs such as 3D packages and digital painting tools, but get your fundamentals down as soon as possible, because they will inform everything you do.



ESSENTIAL READING LIST FOR ARTISTS


Beyond anything by illustrator and teacher Andrew Loomis. His books remain relevant to this day.

The books of George Bridgman are excellent resources for anatomy studies and observations.


Glenn Vilppu's Drawing Course is great for developing a standard process for drawing.

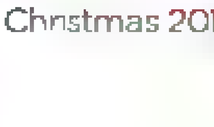

Scott Robertson's collection of books from Design Studio Press are excellent resources for designers.

Composition of Landscape Painting by Edgar Payne is an outstanding book on composition and colour.


How to Draw Comics The Marvel Way is a classic and still one of the best books on the subject.


Alla Prima is every artist's must-have guide. Richard Schmid knows about painting and has written a handy volume.


Complete Guide to Life Drawing by Gottfried Bammes is an excellent resource for figure construction.


Classic Anatomy for Artists by Carl Goldfinger is the ultimate anatomy resource. Great for character concepts.

PORTFOLIO TIPS

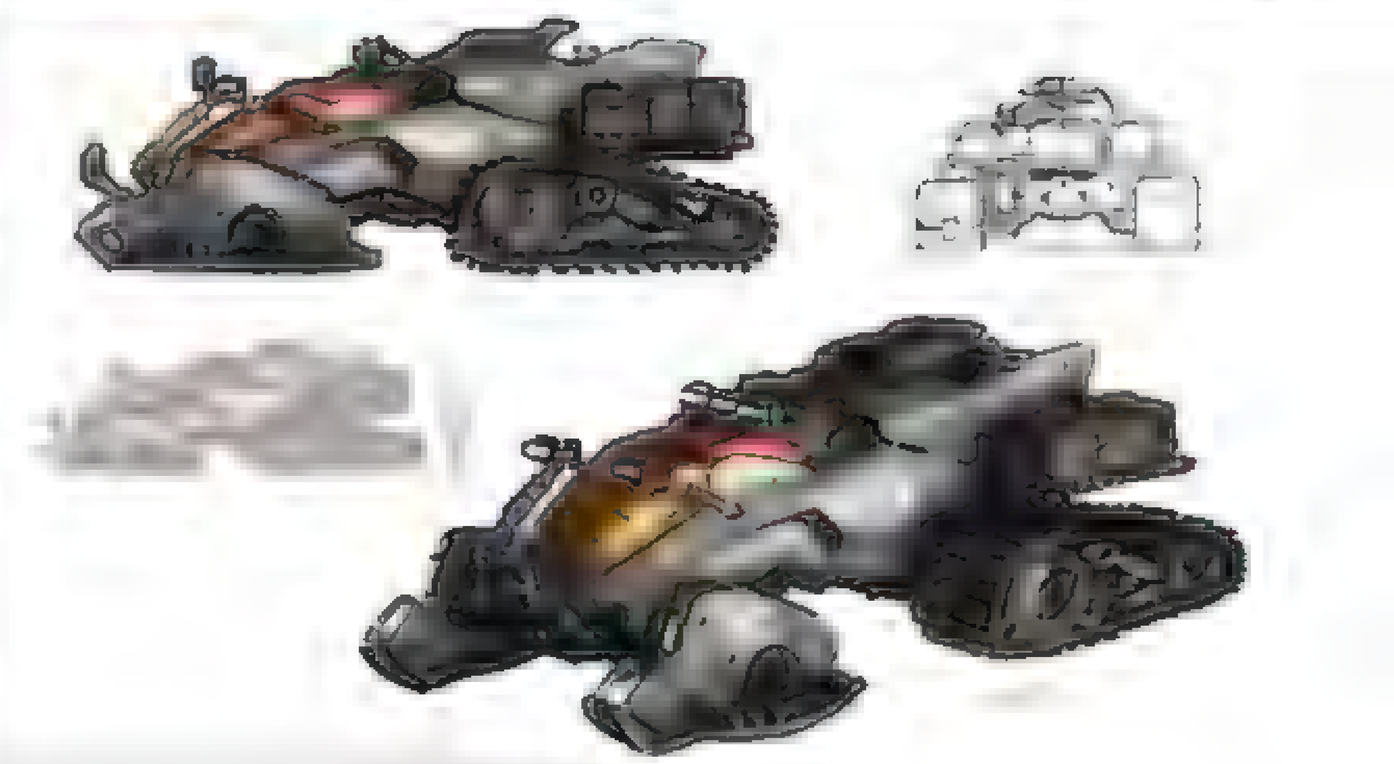
Here's what to include in your portfolio – and what to leave out

SHOW YOU'RE GOOD AT IDEATION

Process is everything. You need to deve op a production-friendly workflow to surv ve in a games studio env ronment, and thumbnai ng shou d be the first step in that process Deve op ng a way to commun cate an idea to your boss in a qu ck and eff cient way that s easy to read s cal ed deation It's the way n which you generate ideas. As a concept art st you re be ng paid to develop ideas The faster you can get them down on the page, the eas er time you ll have doing the ,ob Work smal and lay out your thumbnail page early on to decide how many images you plan on having on it Spend ng a tt e time compos ng the ideat on sheet w l go a ong way to gett ng it completed







FOCUS YOUR PORTFOLIO

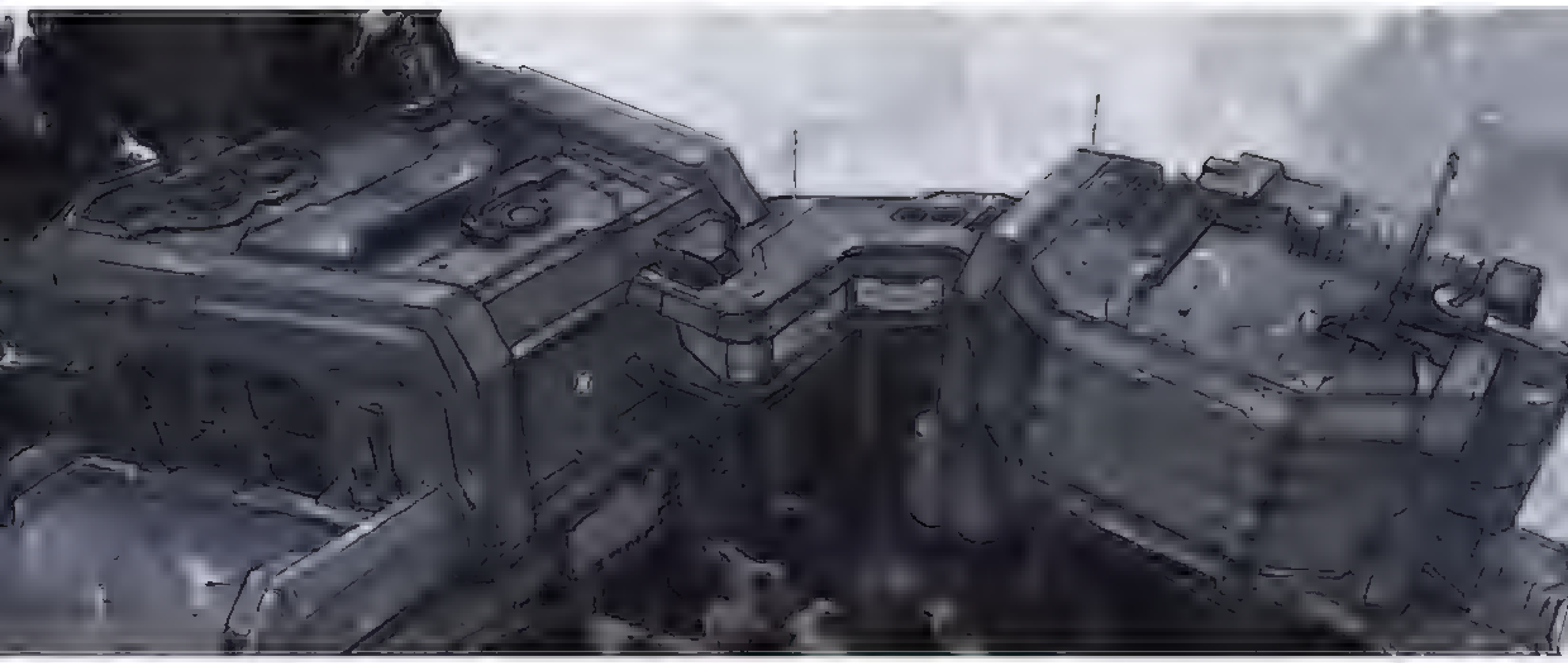
Make sure you fi l your portfol o and spend your t me studying the things you hope to do once you get a fu l-t me ,ob. My favour te area of concept art and the one fee 'm best su ted for is science fiction, and so I ike to present my c ients with as many sc -fi related mages as I can n my portfol o, ike the one you seen here

If you find yourself wanting to put in something you're not pass onate about because you th nk it w l "sel " – perhaps someone sa d, "That's what peop e are looking for nowadays then stop right there You re going to be asked to s t down and spend between eight and ten hours a day doing the work you got h red for, so you shou dn't misrepresent yourself to a studio. F ll your portfol o w th the th ngs you ke to draw and paint. You ll be happy you did so n the long run

REFINE SOME OF YOUR SKETCHES

Show that you can quickly take a chosen design off your ideation sheet and into a state of comp et on that's ready to be modelled if necessary. In a games env ronment you'll spend a lot of time going back and forth between refinement and ideation, unt l you and on something the director likes. Hopefully, f your deation sketches are clear enough you'll have already solved most of the potential ssues in the design, but sometimes you'll have to go back to square one. Be careful to not nvest too much t me in the ref nement phase unt l you've been given the green l ght to take t a l the way, because then there's little chance of your idea being reworked





SHOW OFF A RANGE OF MOOD AND LIGHTING SCENARIOS

If the area you want to focus on is environments, then it's important that you show the studios you're applying to that you can paint a variety of moods in your scenes. Lighting is an important part of an environment designer's job and there's always a big need for these types of artists on a game.

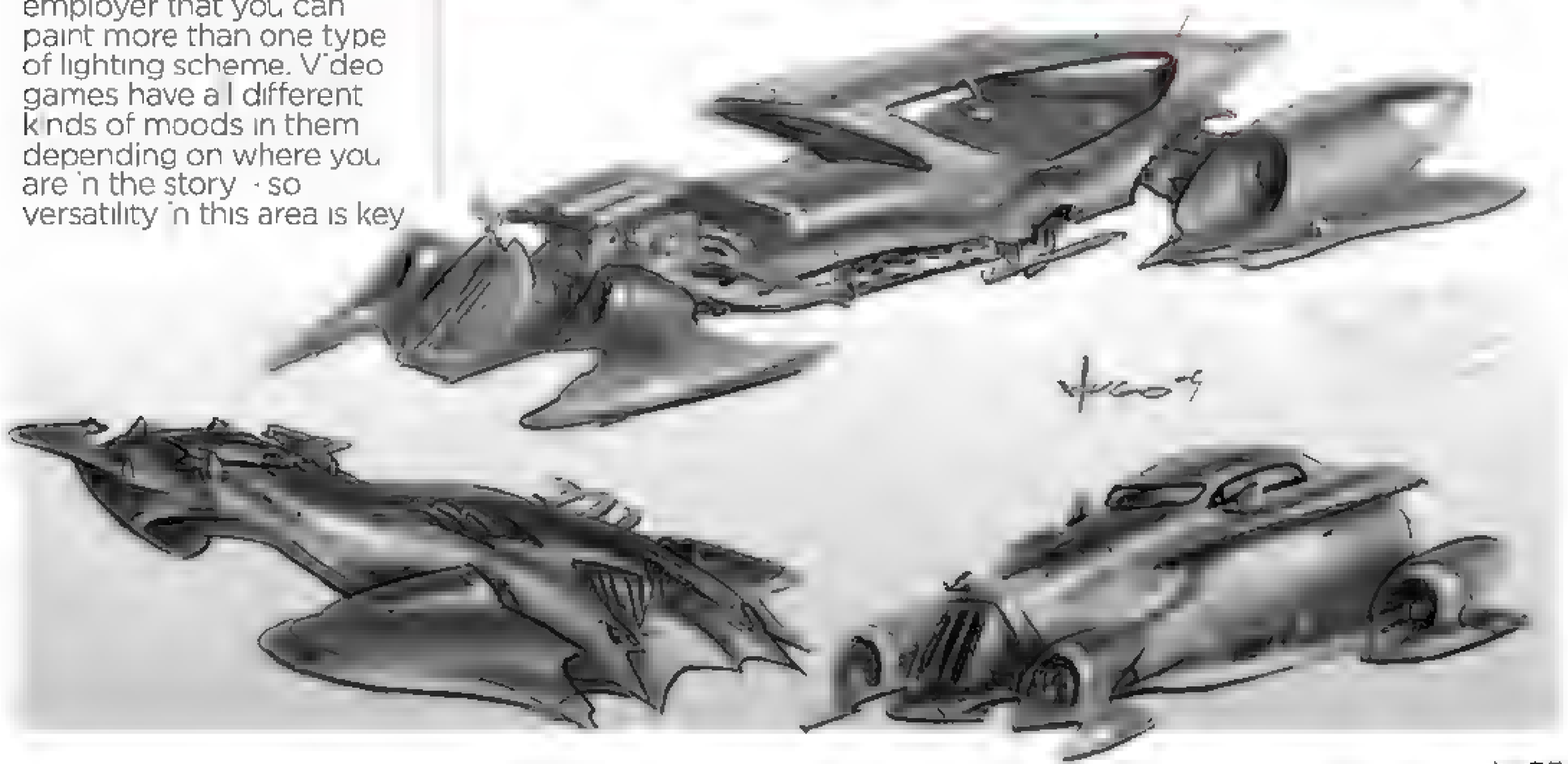
If this is your speciality, show your potential employer that you can paint more than one type of lighting scheme. Video games have all different kinds of moods in them depending on where you are in the story – so versatility in this area is key.

ALWAYS PERSONALISE YOUR CONCEPT WORK

Don't draw just another spaceship – add something to it that makes it stand out. Give it a unique and clearly definable theme. For example, if it's a spaceship then make it a hot-rod spaceship. This additional design effort will go a long way to making your portfolio pieces memorable. If you're concepting a space marine then try making him an old space marine – the oldest of his kind or even an outdated model. Ask yourself how would he look, and what details and treatments can be added to the rendering that would communicate this key idea to the viewer. It's in these details that the design starts to develop a story to support it.

When it comes down to it, you're aiming to design assets that will hopefully be memorable, long-lasting game characters. Showing you can do this in your portfolio submission will go a long way with a video game art director.

> **You're aiming to design assets that will hopefully be memorable and long-lasting**



Next month in...

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX

Discover your style

How to draw from your imagination to create beautiful images

SEE PAGES 30 AND 62 FOR FULL DETAILS

Jennifer Healy shares her secrets to ethereal portraits www.jennifer-healy.com

Inspiration and advice

Rising Stars: the winners!
Find out who we think are the best illustrators to watch out for in 2014.

Let your mind wander
Let your mind wander to create sublime, extraordinary portraits with Rafael Sarmento.

Fresh new ways to paint environments
Fresh new ways to paint environments as Rasmus Berggreen lets you into his world.

Underwater environments
Simon Dominic uses Corel Painter to create a lost world under the sea.

ISSUE 104 ON SALE IN UK *6 DECEMBER 2013*

Manga Studio 5

STEP OUTSIDE THE COMIC FRAME

One of the golden rules of comics is that nothing should break out of the panel frame... except when it should. **PJ Holden** shows you how

Manga Studio's panel frame tools are a super-quick way to create fast, easy frame panels – or if you're more used to the running conventions of US/UK comics, comic panels. These tools are especially useful when you want to add in text and insert comic book layouts, and can help create brilliantly readable comics. That doesn't mean that you'll be limited to self-contained panel formats. Sometimes action is called for, and a comic character can't be contained by a comic frame. In these instances we need to help our characters break away from their constraints. For this article, we're going to assume you've either penciled – or at least roughed out – a page, and that you have at least one element that just wants to explode out of the frame.

1 Define the panel frame

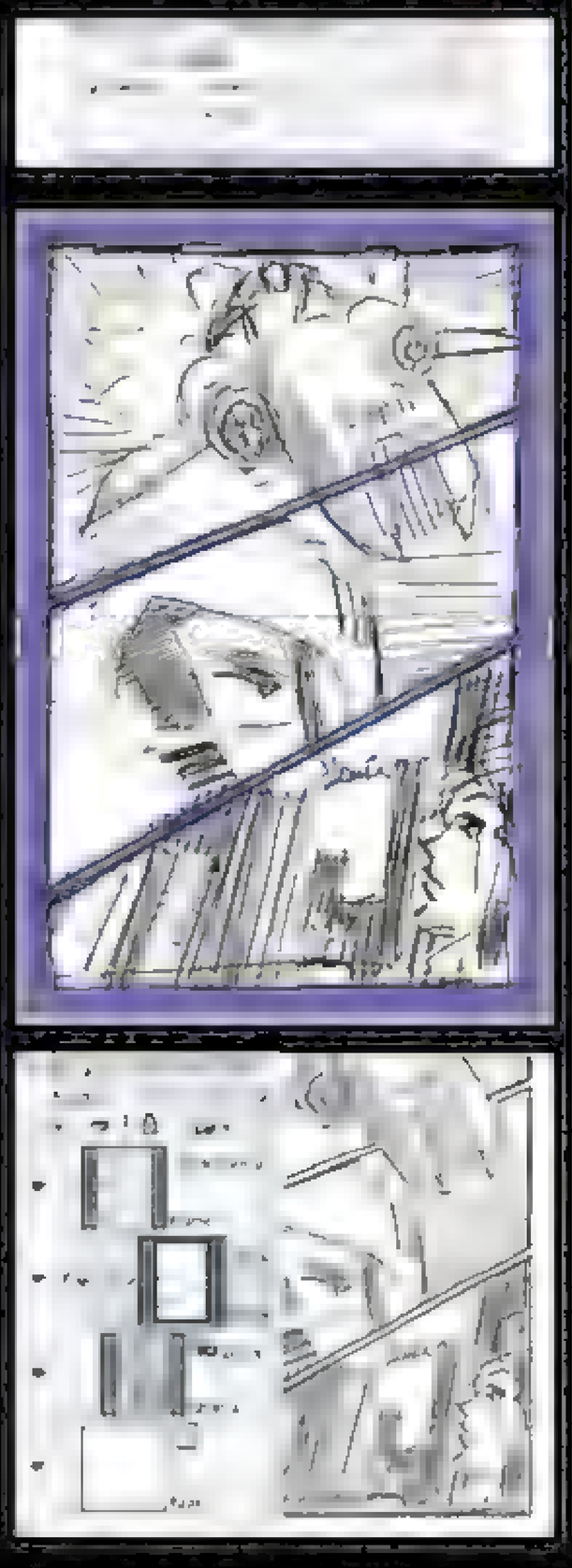
Create a new Panel Frame Layer using Layer>New Frame Layer. This will create a special folder, which is masked off to show only the panels you've created. The mask applies to any layers within this folder – so make sure you've moved any pencils and inks into this folder. It will also add a border along those masked-off areas. You can specify the width of these borders yourself.

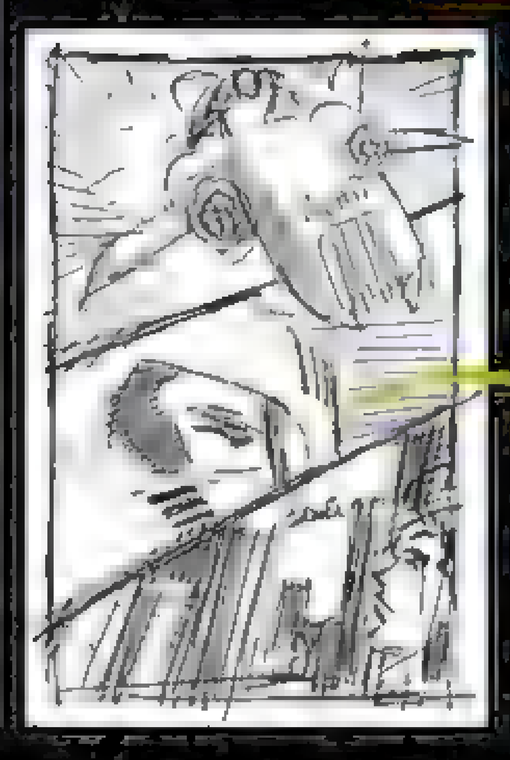
2 Slice and render

Using the Divide Frame Border tool, you can then slice up the larger frame into smaller panels as you see fit. Holding Shift while using the tool locks the slicing to the vertical, horizontal and 45-degree steps. You can also set the height and width of this slice in the tool's properties. Take your time, and once you've got a layout that you're happy with, you can rasterise it using Layer>Rasterize.

3 Cut out and keep

Once rasterised, your frame folder will be replaced by a plain folder, but it'll have a mask where the panels were, and above it a layer with the borders drawn on to it. Selecting the mask on the folder layer, you can now draw on the mask to reveal more of the layers contained within the folder. You can edit at this point, too – in the panel border layer you can erase the parts of the border that you no longer need or want.





Artist PROFILE

PJ Holden
COUNTRY:
Northern Ireland

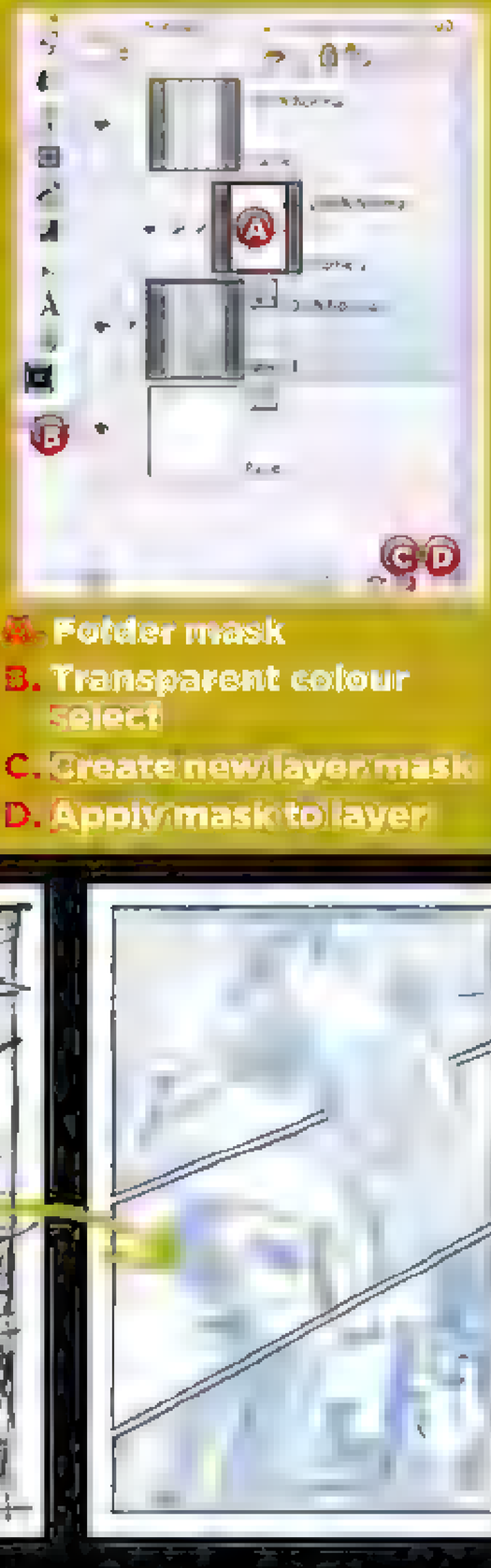


PJ has been a professional comic artist for over a decade, drawing predominantly for 2000AD on Judge Dredd, Rogue Trooper and more. He's also the co-creator of Numbercruncher with Si Spurrier.
www.paulholden.com

A NOTE ON MASKS

shown on the layer (where Photoshop would use black and white for the same effect). This means you need to draw 100 per cent transparent ink on the mask to indicate artwork to be hidden, and any other colour for artwork to be revealed. Using various levels of opacity (with any colour) you can

that your layer expression is set to either Grey or Colour.



A. Folder mask
B. Transparent colour select
C. Create new layer mask
D. Apply mask to layer

Manga Studio 5

DRAW AND PAINT IN MANGA STUDIO 5

Using this Photoshop alternative, Dave Kendall creates a steampunk behemoth that's threatening a medieval samurai castle and its defenders

Having been so vocal on my aversion to renting my tools, I've been asked by the fine people at ImagineFX to put an alternative to Photoshop through its paces. With this workshop I've decided to use Manga Studio 5 exclusively to produce an illustration from scratch.

I'd like to state that I love Photoshop CS6, and will be using it until the day it's obsolete. However as a creative you should have the flexibility to adapt, and I have approached this very much as a beginner. I've trawled the net for tutorials and information to iron out my lack of knowledge and experience. However, if you're familiar with Photoshop, Manga Studio will feel familiar, with many of the tools and functions in the same place.

As a digital drawing program it's a pretty stunning addition to anyone's toolset. The perspective tools alone make the small price of admission worth it. The paint engine is also pretty powerful, and it certainly gives Photoshop and Painter a run for their money. I'm only scratching the surface of this software, and I'm sure with time I will discover much more. It's comforting to know that no software will have a monopoly on digital creation. Some will be easier to use than others, but the ability to create digitally won't be dictated by one powerful player.



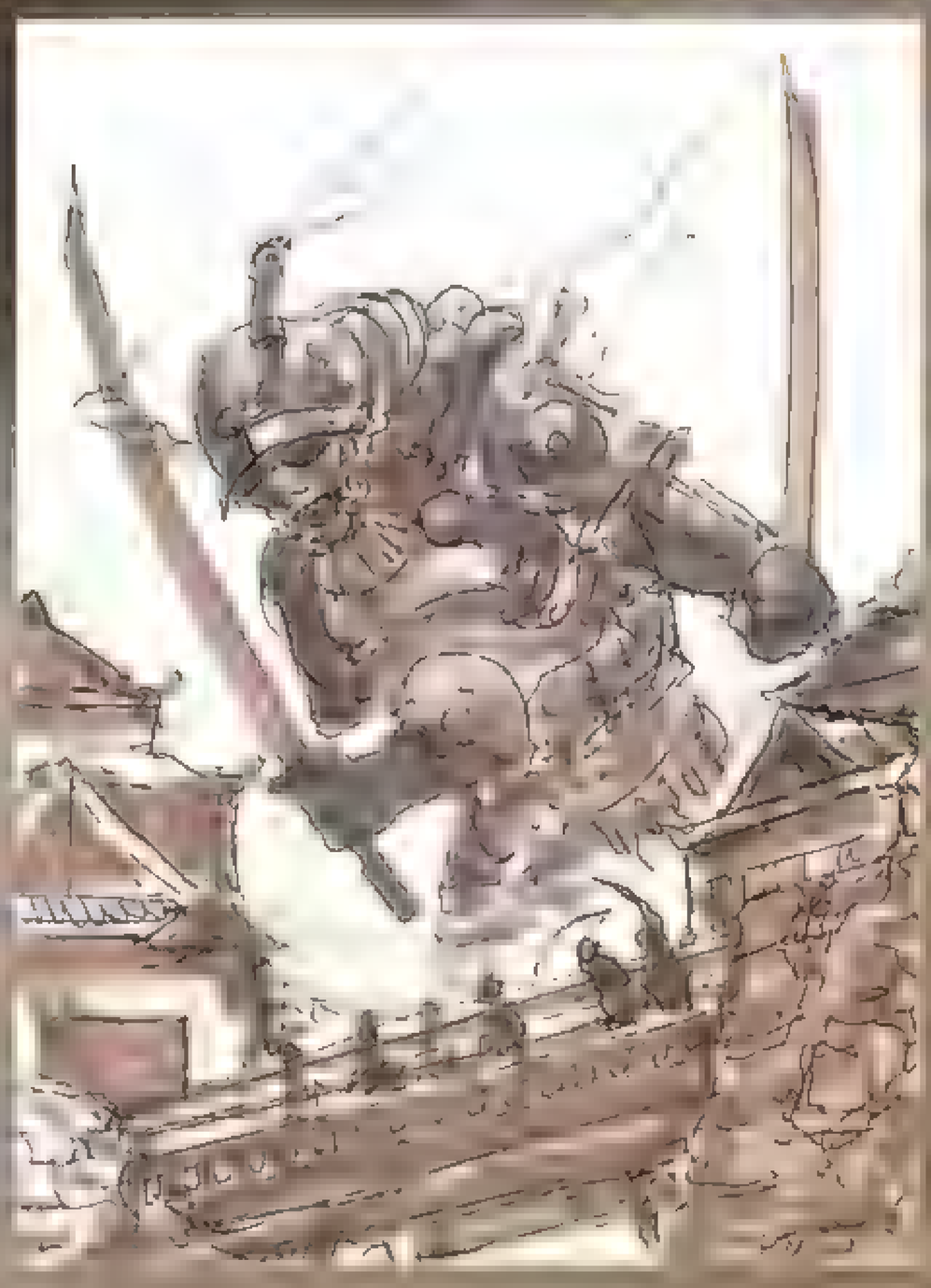


1 The initial concept

Pacific Rim meets Steampunk Samurai is my starting point. I'm looking to create a fun image with the ability to demonstrate the perspective tools inside Manga Studio, so a medieval samurai castle preparing for an attack from a giant steam-powered samurai colossus gives me plenty of drama.

2 Back to basics

I always start my i



3 In perspective

I've estimated the perspective by eye in the sketch. However, Manga Studio's perspective tools help you realise how accurate your drawing is. This can help you improve your sketching, as you can see where you have misplaced vanishing points and horizon lines.



4 The Perspective Grid

There are two ways of creating the horizon and vanishing points. Both ways will create a layer that can be toggled on and off. You can either click Layer>Ruler> Create Perspective Ruler... and then choose two- or three-point perspective. This will create a series of lines. Alternatively, click the set square symbol from the Tool palette. Use the Perspective Ruler to lay in vanishing points that match your sketch. The vanishing points will be created automatically.

StoreMags

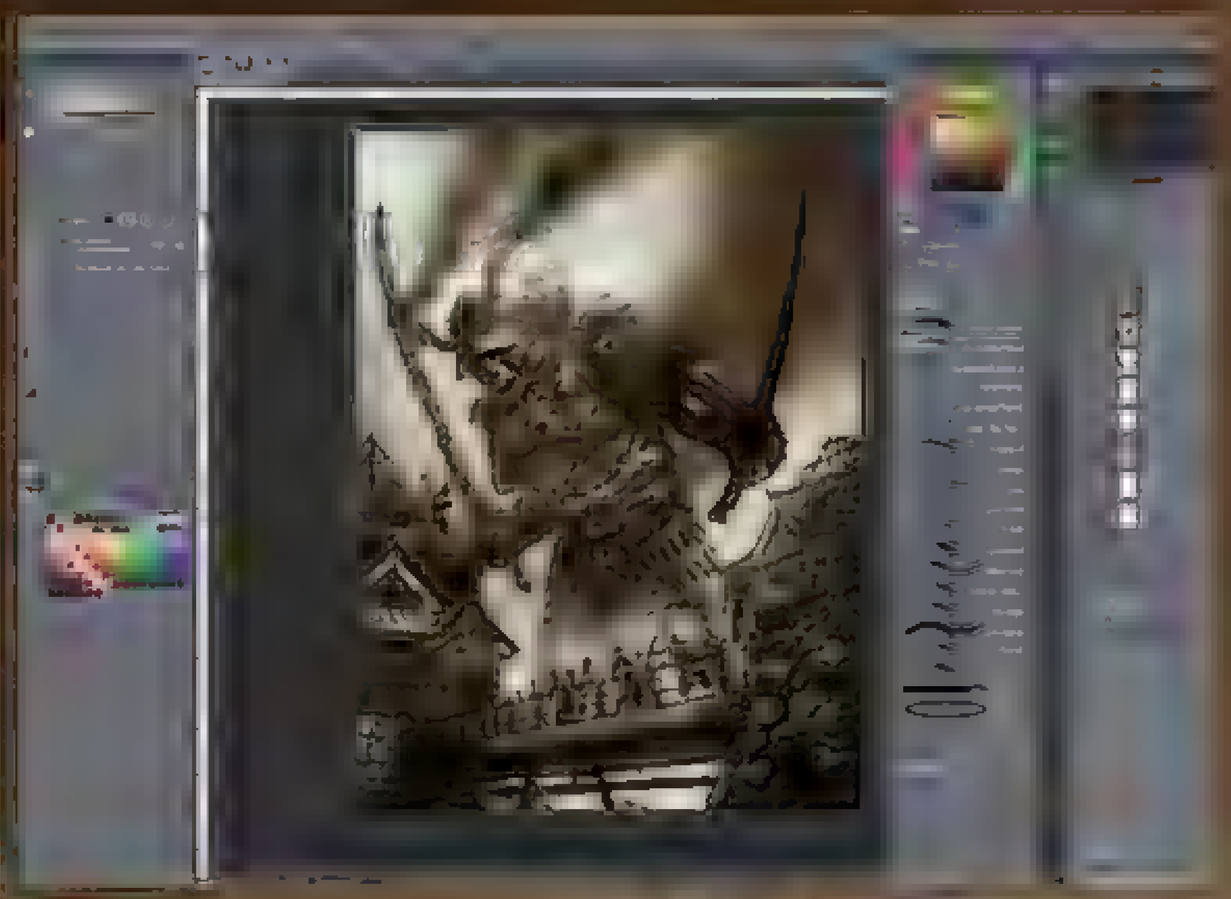
5 Drawing in perspective

Make sure the Perspective Grid is enabled. The lines should be purple. If they are green, use the Select tool and click the small square icons. This should turn the lines purple. With the Perspective Grid enabled, every line you draw or paint will follow the perspective guides. Manga Studio also judges very effectively which lines you're drawing to. Choose a brush to your own preference. I use a Big Pen ink pen created by Manga Studio user Frenden. It has a smooth and lag-free flow with a nice, organic, thick and thin line.

PRO SECRETS

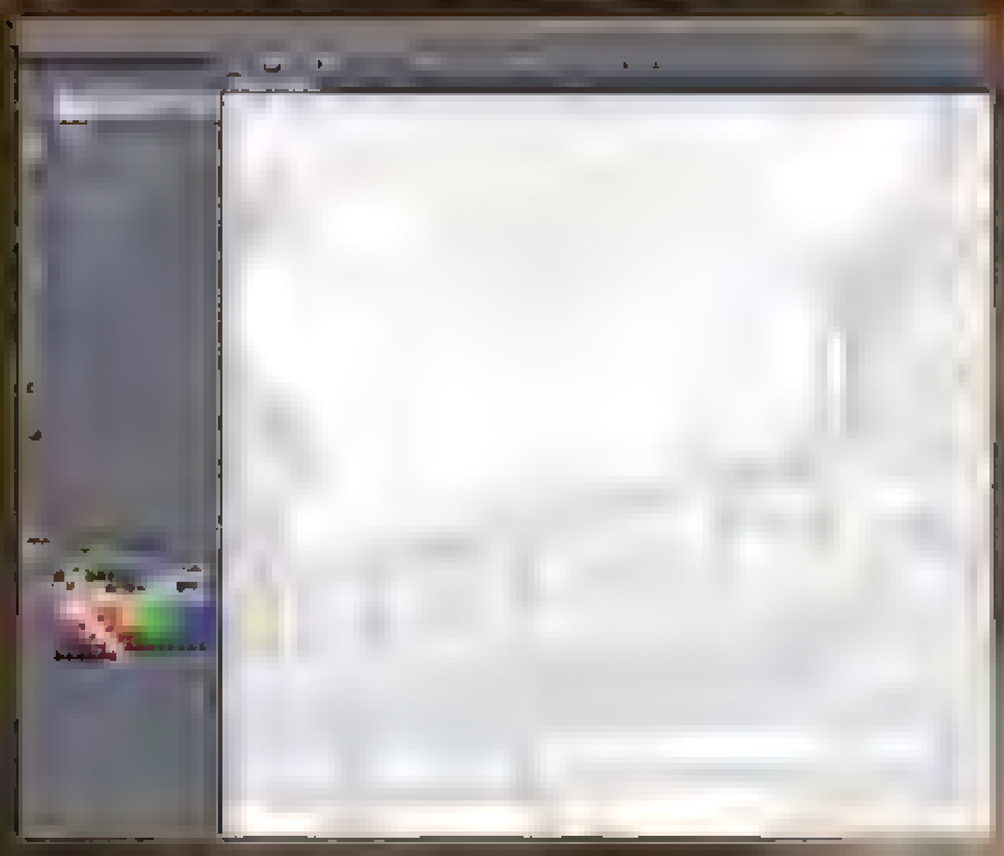
Saving as a Manga Studio document

This is very important. If you wish to retain the use of the perspective document as a native Manga Studio file. You can easily convert to Photoshop. A PSD file will not retain the perspective.



6 Toggle perspective

I sketch out the shapes of the castle buildings and the connecting bridge. The speed and accuracy that I'm able to do this makes Manga Studio my default choice for digital drawing. By toggling the visibility of the perspective layer you can go freehand quite simply.



7 Standard approach to layers



8 From monochrome to colour

It's time to add some colour. The single piece of functionality that's missing from the Blend mode [illegible] this useful mode so much. I regret its absence. For colouring I like to concentrate on Overlay and Multiply. I use separate layers to lay these two different modes. Overlay is probably the more useful of the two. Not only can it add dark glazes and create glow, but if you choose middle ranges it can emulate the blending of [illegible]



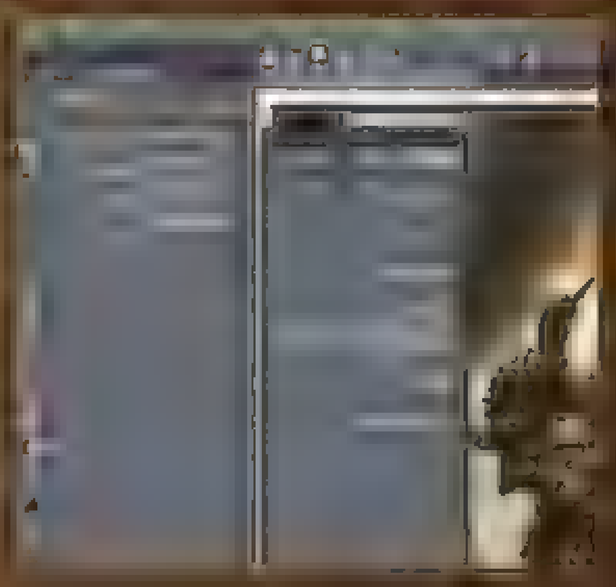


9 [illegible]



12 Drawing and painting aids

When it comes to drawing and painting, there is more to Manga Studio than just the Perspective tool. Clicking the set square symbol displays an array of special rulers and guides, which can make the drawing and painting of ellipses and curves a joy rather than a chore. I use the Concentric Circle guide to paint the tang of the sword. Toggling the visibility of the layer on and off enables accurate ellipses and freehand painting with ease.



13 Foreground tweaks and final touches

I turn the guides on to help paint the bushes and buildings. I make use of the on-screen measure to create and control. Unlike in Photoshop, I'm able to paint straight lines of differing length and thickness. I then use a combination of Multiply, Darken and Lighten layers to add atmospheric perspective. I try to create a sense of distance between the castle and the hood by lightening the shadows on the figure and darkening parts of the bridge and the surrounding architecture.



14 Final thoughts on Manga Studio

I'm pleased with how this image has turned out, considering that I'm an experienced drawing Manga Studio user. Through trial and error I'm happy to say that I was able to get up and running very quickly. Having a good working knowledge of Photoshop helps. At this moment I'd give Photoshop the edge where painting and manipulation is concerned. Manga Studio, however, is the program I now use to plan my images. It's the ultimate digital drawing program. Manga Studio has only begun to concentrate on the painting brush engine in this edition, however, it already has a great engine with huge future potential. A rare example where you get what you pay for doesn't hold true; Manga Studio delivers much more for less.

11 Painting approach

Many of the values have already been established by my monochrome work, and the colour scheme has been decided by the Overlay and Multiply layers. I work from back to front, refining details and rendering in clouds, smoke and steam. I keep it simple because I want the attention primarily on the castle, with the castle and its inhabitants providing the extra story elements.

12 Storytelling

I come from a background in comics. I love storytelling, be it sequentially or in single images. I always find an image is far more satisfying if there's a sense of drama. Historically, the samurai would have defended the castle to the last man, even against impossible odds. I think this image is pretty much as impossible as it gets. But who knows –

PRO SECRETS



15 Painting a giant

Starting with the silhouette form, I then roughly establish the lighting and basic textures using Soft brushes to add detail and refine form using Multiply, Overlay and Color (Glow) modes to enhance shadow and highlights. If I've taken time on the monochromatic rendering this should flow easily, because most of the work has been done. It's just a matter of fleshing out details and adding weight to the colossus.



THE LOWDOWN ON MANGA STUDIO 5

PROS

CONS

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/ B A L L I S T I C /

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX Reviews



Artist's Choice Award
Software and hardware with a five-star rating receives the IFX Artist's Choice award!

The latest digital art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team...



SOFTWARE

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Photoshop's little brother gets its yearly refresh, but are there enough new features to justify an upgrade?

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94 The Art of Brom
From teenage angst to international fame – and 30 years of gothic art.

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d'Artiste: Matte Painting 3; The Otherworldly Adventures of Tyler Washburn; Dark Satanic Mills; Shades of Milk and Honey; The Devil Delivered and Other Tales.

TRAINING

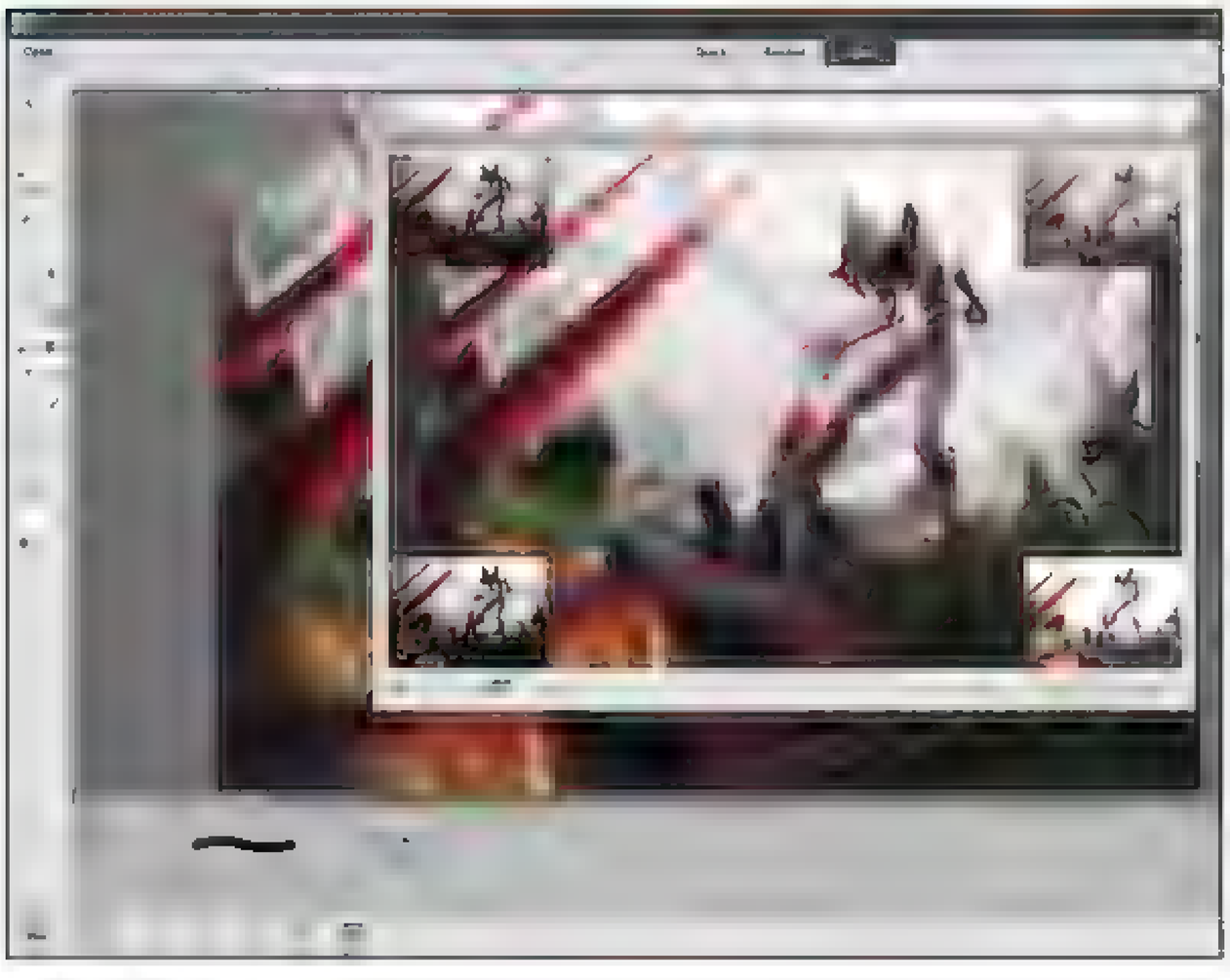
96 Introduction to Maya 2014
Join CG artist Eric Keller on a marathon tour of the leading 3D animation program – and learn how to think like a 3D artist

RATINGS EXPLAINED Magnificent Good Ordinary Poor Atrocious

Photoshop Elements 12

NEW ELEMENTS Photoshop's little brother gets its yearly refresh, but are there enough new features to justify an upgrade?

Price | Company | Web | Contact



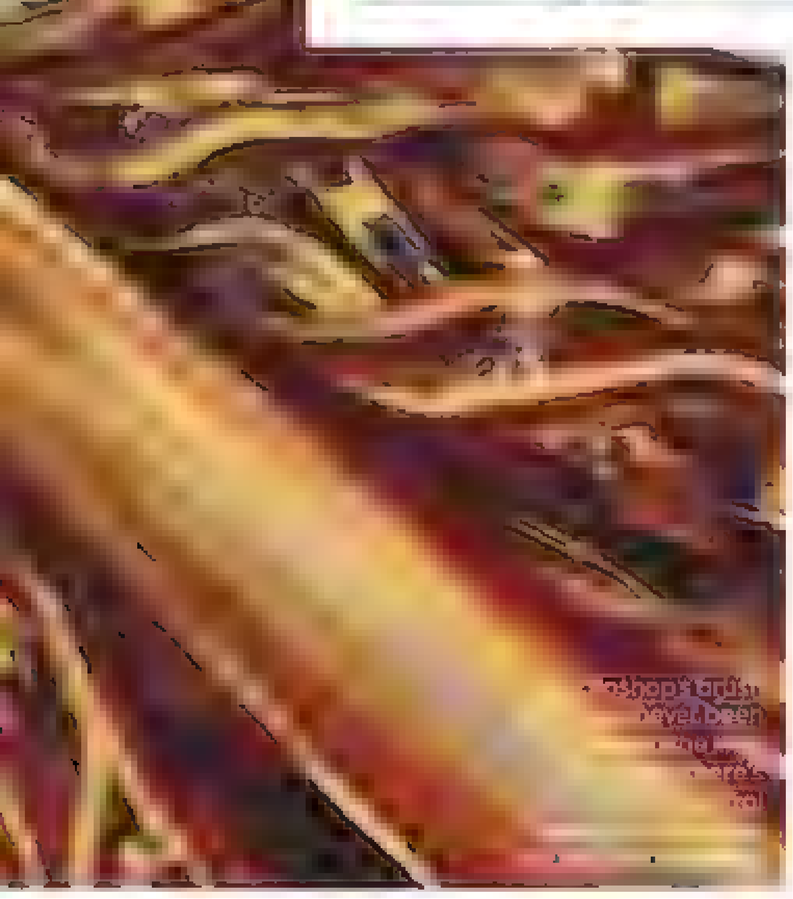
As shown in this artwork by Linda Treffer, the new Auto Smart Tone correction tool enables you to interactively nudge its results to get the look you prefer

Adobe's plan to move full-fat Photoshop to a monthly subscription-only model hasn't exactly been greeted with universal acclaim, to put it mildly. And it means that ever more 'light', non-corporate users will be looking for a standalone equivalent, such as Photoshop Elements, Adobe's own cut-down, consumer-level version of Photoshop.

Fortunately, Elements remains as a one-off purchase and this latest annual update represents better value for money than ever. While sometimes regarded as a dumbed-down Photoshop, Elements often debuts interesting and useful features even before they find their way to its big brother, and version 12 is no exception.

Take Auto Correct, for example. This has long been a handy way of making instant, automatic corrections to areas





move objects and people n an mage and have Elements automat ca ly f l in the background with some ntell gent' cloning nevitab y, there s also a big emphasis on socia media w th opt ons to instant y share mages to the likes of Twitter and F ickr Somewhat more usefu s the ab l ty to share mages to Adobe's Reve cloud service and then disp ay, organ se and present these v a a phone or tablet and accompanying app

Of course, Elements is aimed pr mar ly at image ed t ng more than image creat on, but it's no slouch in that department either. This year there aren't any ma or changes to the way E ements handles brushes, and it's stil not a patch on something l ke Painter in that regard, but you can get such as colour balance and contrast, but it s rather hit and miss depend ng on the subject t either works quite wel or fa ls miserab y

W th the new Auto Smart Tone in E ements 12, it's stil mostly automat c, but now you have the option to nteractively tweak the results, for examp e reducing contrast if the effect has made it too strong It wi l also 'learn' your preferences for each mage type the more you use t. Guided Edits are a k nd of interact ve tutoria that wa k you through the steps needed for various comp ex operations, such as restoring an old photo

Photoshop's Content-Aware move tool also makes it n enab ng you to surprisingly soph st cated resu ts w th a bit of experimentat on You can adjust size and opacity a ong with more complex aspects such as fade, jitter, hardness and so on, and combined with a decent graphics tablet, it's very effect ve

t s probably not worth upgrad ng from version 11 given the relative lack of new features, but as a new buy Photoshop Elements remains excel ent value for money and prov des plenty of power (not to mention tried-and-tested Adobe expertise) for the asking pr ce. If al you need s a professiona grade mage editor and organiser that doesn't take a year to master, then look no further than this

The Guided Edits feature – Restore Old Photo, for instance – suggests which tools to use and the right sequence to use them

"As a new buy, Elements remains excellent value for money, and provides plenty of power for the asking price"

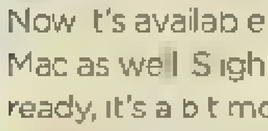
DETAILS

COMPETITION AT A GLANCE

Four lightweight programs that give Elements a run for its money

PaintShop Pro X6

n PC **Price** £60
www.corel.com



Nearly as old as Photoshop Elements PaintShop Pro has grown into a ful y fledged image ed tor to r va its better-known competitor We think that Pa ntShop Pro is much more user-friendly However, its brush too s aren't near y as flexib e

GIMP 2.8

PC/Mac/ nux
Free **Web** www.gimp.org



The GNU mage Manipu at on Program, as t's called, started off as a free Linux app icat on Now t's availab e for PC and Mac as well S ightly rough and ready, it's a b t more complex to use than other editors

Pixelmator 2.2

n Mac **Price** £10
www.p xelmator.com



Spec f ca ly des gned for the Mac, th s fair y new program boasts a c ean interface and prides tself on ease of use, wh le sti offer ng a great range of image-ed t ng features. It s compet t vely pr ced, too

PhotoPlus X6

n PC **Price** £71
www.ser f.com



There aren't rea ly any brush or image creat on tools to speak of with this one, but it's probab y the most profess ona and advanced of al these opt ons when t comes down to pure image man pulation

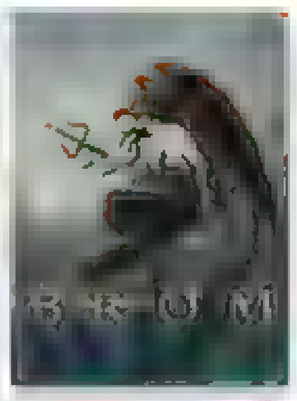


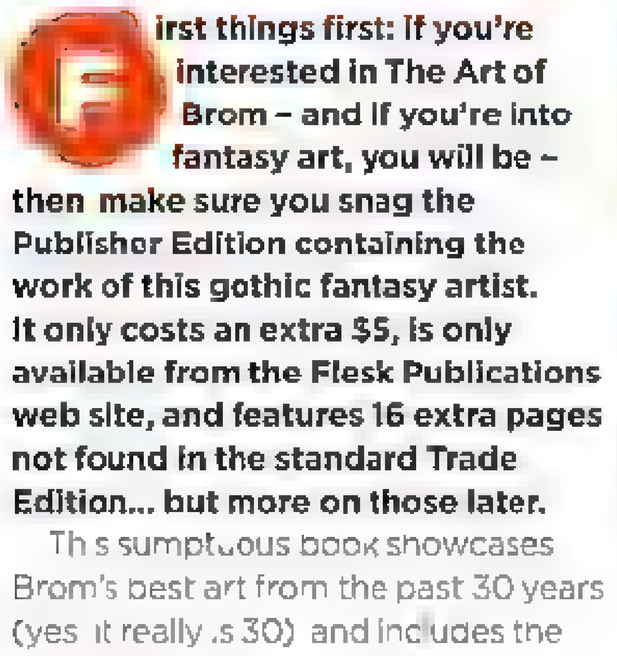
The Art of Brom

A GUY CALLED GERALD From teenage angst to international art fame, Brom's story is here – and he's got the pictures to prove it

First things first: If you're interested in The Art of Brom – and if you're into fantasy art, you will be – then make sure you snag the Publisher Edition containing the work of this gothic fantasy artist. It only costs an extra $5, is only available from the Flesk Publications web site, and features 16 extra pages not found in the standard Trade Edition... but more on those later.

This sumptuous book showcases Brom's best art from the past 30 years (yes it really is 30) and includes the fascinating history of his career to date from toddler to present-day icon of dark fantasy.



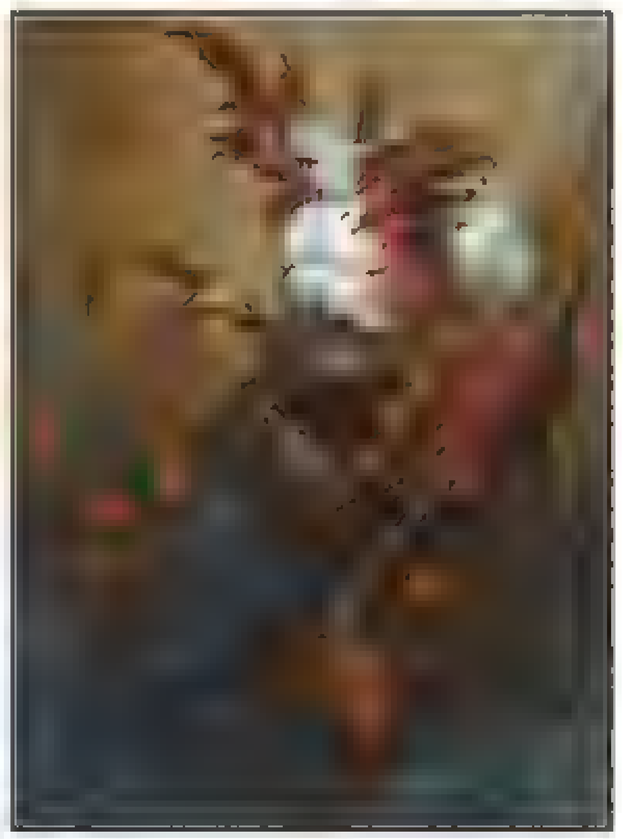


Brom says that his wife Laurie Lee Brom has been the muse who's inspired him for a lot of his fantasy work

If it weren't actually true, Brom's childhood story would seem a most stereotypical. As a self-confessed "army brat", he spent his early years shifting from city to city never quite staying long enough to fit in, largely through his older brother, he discovered a delight in all things macabre and weird, including the art of Frank Frazetta and the likes of Eerie magazine.

It was when the family moved to Enterprise, Alabama for his high-school years that Brom's "outsider" status really kicked in. "There the culture was football, football, football" he wryly notes. Thankfully for us, if not for him at the time, this testosterone-filled environment only encouraged him to cement his reputation as a brooding, angsty teen who was into punk rock and martial arts, determined to grow his artistic gifts.

And, of course, it's the art we've come for and what art it is. From his career-establishing days of card art for TSR, through to recent work for Blizzard's Diablo and encompassing plenty of his personal images along the way, it's all here with most images generously displayed over an entire page. The work isn't chronologically arranged in any discernible form, and there isn't much in the way of explanation for most of them, but that's okay: you can spend hours just drinking in the detail.



One of Brom's pieces that he produced for Diablo III. This bad boy is called a Triune Vessel.

Further sections explore the creation of illos for the three books he has written, and then there's that crowning glory: 16 pages which detail his process in the studio, complete with step-by-step illustrations and a host of pencil sketches. It's a fitting finish to what must rank as the definitive history of Gerald Brom – so far, at least.

RATING ✍✍✍✍✍

d'Artiste: Matte Painting 3

THE BIG PICTURE A masterclass in creating matte paintings, from the realistic to the futuristic and all stops in between

Publisher: Price: Web: Available:

Matte painting has always been a specialist skill, but if you need any evidence of just how complex and technical it can be these days, dip your nose into d'Artiste's Matte Painting 3.

Working professionals David Luong, Damien Macé and Mi an Schere walk you through a total of ten ep c matting projects, combining Photoshop, 3D software and various other apps to create astonishing vistas. David's game- ndustry background covers this area nicely wh le the other authors mix some real-world examp es of the r work with the r own personal projects. A though these tutorials are notiona ly step-by-step, don t expect a "click here" or "enter this number" approach. These peop e assume you know what you're do ng n terms of mechan cs.

Fill ng out the book are numerous examples of matte paintings by these three, along w th art and detai ed capt ons from a host of artists whose work encompasses fi ms, video games, commercia s, TV shows and more. Even if you have no interest in matte paint ng as a career, there are p enty of insights along the way and other handy tips to pick up. You'll a so get the low-down from working professionals on how the industry operates.





David Luong explains in detail how he painted this matte scene.

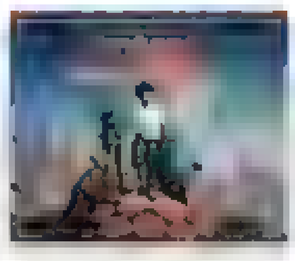
RATING

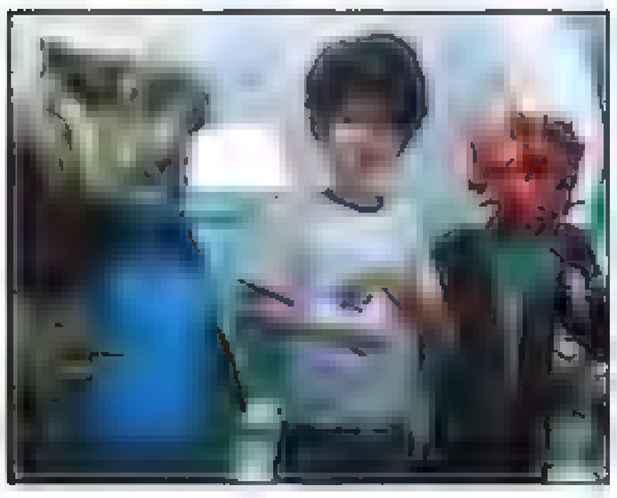
The Otherworldly Adventures of Tyler Washburn

CLASS ACT It takes a lot for a chi dren's picture book to stand out from the crowd. Step forward Dylan Cole with his slick debut..

Author: Dylan Cole Publisher: Price: Web: Available:

Between working on the likes of Avatar, TRON: Legacy and Oz the Great and Powerful, acclaimed concept artist and matte painter Dylan Cole somehow found the time to write and illustrate this engaging children's story book. His passion for this personal project shines through on every page, and parents will be more than happy to read and reread it to their kids at bedtime.





The test audience (FX Cliff Hopes kids) instantly noticed the quality of Dylan s art compared with the usua picture book fare

Dylan's book tells the ta e of gifted but m sch evous Tyler Washburn, who gets transported to the intergalactic STAR Academy, where his ta ents are recognised. Soon he's ga livanting across the ga axy, ultimately saving the day, before being whisked back home.

Boys in part cular will lap up the mixture of space, a iens and annoying s sters. Young 'uns of both sexes however, wi l be entranced by the i lustrations that buzz w th co our and dynam sm wh le retaining a ovely hand-pa nted fee ; and the imaginat ve-looking al ens aren't at al scary (so no need to worry about nightmares). We get the feeling that this isn't the last we'l see of young Master Washburn.

RATING

Also look at...

Get inspired by the latest recommended fict on

Dark Satanic Mills

Authors Marcus Sedgw ck, Julian Sedgwick, John H ggins and Marc Olivent
Publisher Walker Books **Price** £13
Available Now



Nothing to do w th Pat Mi ls (despite h s approving quote on the cover), the stark black and wh te i ustrations n this graph c novel do recal early 2000 AD. Wr tten by the Sedgwick brothers and i ustrated by John H gg ns and Marc Olivent, it's the story of one woman s epic road trip across the country in a near-future Britain. Grim and dystop an stuff.

Shades of Milk and Honey

Author Mary Rob nette Kowa
Publisher Corsair **Price** £8
Available Now



Here's proof that romant c fantasy fict on needn't be a l about mooching vampires. Mary Kowal's debut novel is the k nd of thing Jane Austen m ght have written f she was born in an alternate universe – one where female G amorists, manipulators of natural magic, yearn to be on an equal foot ng with the r male equ va ents. Part romance and part fantasy, it's wr tten in the mannered Austen sty e throughout.

The Devil Delivered and Other Tales

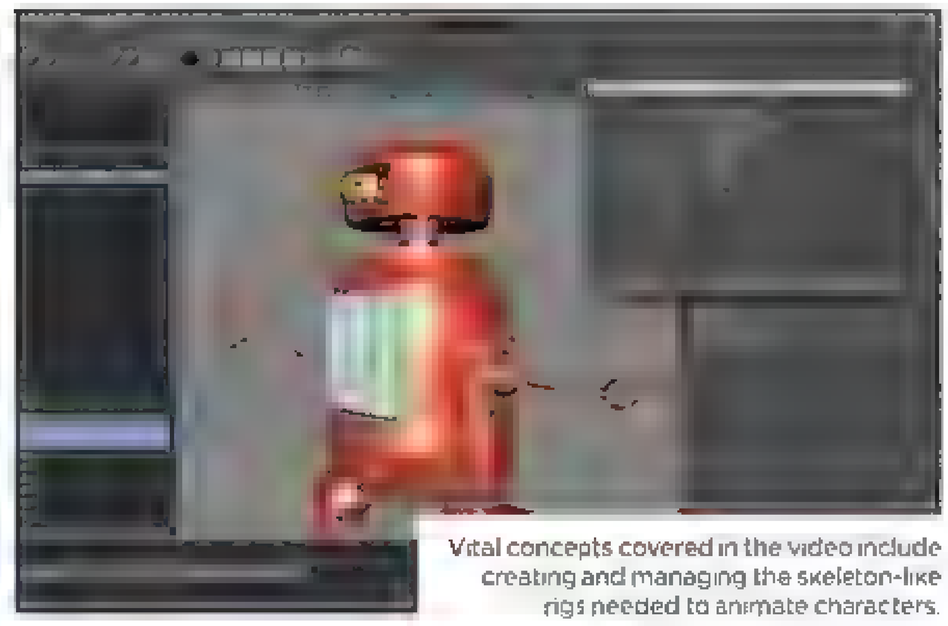
Author Steven Er kson
Publisher Bantam Press **Price** £17
Available Now



Steven Er kson s best known for his Ma azan Book of the Fa len fantasy series , but here he branches out into the short(er) story, offering four disparate tales set in different m lieus. Th s s not particu arly easy read ng, because there s a sense that the au thor is deliberate y experimenting with both form and content in each story. If you can stick with t, though, you'll be rewarded with orig na , imag native and often bizarre exper ences.



Maya is one of the most powerful 3D programs around. Eric Keller's exhaustive video will help you get to grips with it



Vital concepts covered in the video include creating and managing the skeleton-like rigs needed to animate characters.





Introduction to Maya 2014

MAYA GURU Join CG artist Eric Keller on a marathon tour of the leading 3D animation program – and learn how to think like a 3D artist

Publisher	Price	Format	Web

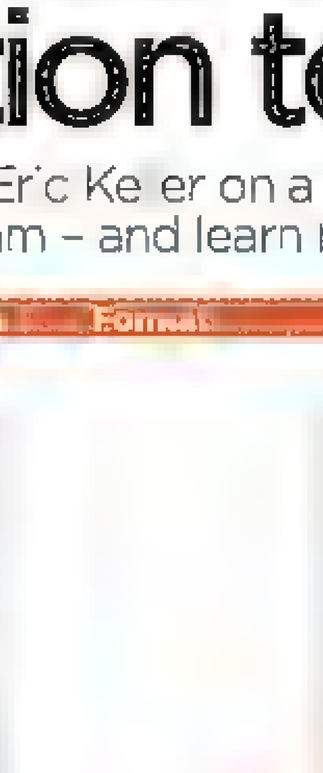
This is a formidable training video for a formidable software package. With pro-grade tools for 3D modelling, animation and rendering, Maya is the tool of choice for top-drawer studios such as Pixar, right down to solo artists.

Unfortunately, the software can often bewilder the user with the range of tools it offers. This is why many Maya artists will be grateful for the eight hours Eric Keller spends here, methodically setting out the program's options and interface.

Eric starts with a tour of the user interface for Maya newcomers, before exploring different facets of the program. These include the various modelling systems and the deep power of Maya's nodes – essentially containers that describe how an object is formed or how it's subsequently transformed. Eric's aim isn't just to show you which buttons to click; he wants you to take control of the underlying concepts so that you can create the effects you want with greater efficiency.

A closing sequence comes full circle to focus on the Maya interface once more, this time showing how you can tailor it to suit the way you work. You'll also learn the best way to organise your content and set up Maya projects – again, a crucial path to working faster. Eric's narration throughout is full of authority. Occasionally he risks getting too deep into a topic too early, but stick with him and the logic of the program always becomes clear.

Note that this is an introduction to Maya, not an introduction to creating 3D art. If you're unfamiliar with the basics of CG, this certainly isn't the place to start. The video's value is in helping you make sense of a sprawling but incredibly powerful program. At $69 it seems like a big investment for a training video, try putting a value on the weeks you'll save as your command of your tools grows.



ERIC KELLER

Eric has been working as a professional CG artist since 1998, creating animations and images for both the entertainment industry and for scientific visualisation. He's written books on ZBrush and Maya, and created articles for our sister magazine 3D World. He teaches at the Gnomon School of Visual Effects and has been a guest lecturer at Harvard Medical School. Eric has recently been creating insect models for etymologist and author EO Wilson as part of the Life on Earth iBook project.



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Comic Artist



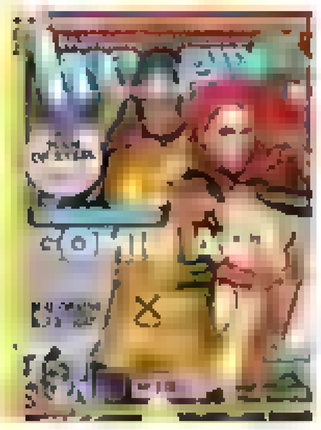
Fantasy Illustrator



Digital Painting

If you want a print back issue, only the previous six (below) are available. We provide a much larger back catalogue with our digital editions*

Issue 97 July 2013



How could ImagineFX not ce ebrate the 50th ann versary of Marvel's X-Men or 75 years of DC's Superman n this month's comic special issue? And w th workshops on mood ighting in your comics how to pose two heroes and beating creative block, you'l soon be a digital art superhero'

Issue 98 August 2013



Be inspired by Simon Dominic's monstrously good cover art, then discover how paleoart has evolved over the years, as we talk to the artists who paint dinosaurs as realistica ly as poss'ble. Workshops from Katie De Sousa and Weta's Christ an Pearce also riff on the Lost World theme!

Issue 99 September 2013



To celebrate Magic: The Gathering's 20th birthday, we ta k to some amazing card artists, such as Jason Chan, Scott M Fisher and John Stanko, while workshop artists include Aleksi Briclot and Vo kan Baga. Elsewhere, Sparth 'sculpts' a sci-fi vista and Dave Rapoza paints a dark, brooding scene

Issue 100 October 2013



Our bumper 100th ann versary issue looks back to our past, and casts an eye over the artists of the future There's a countdown of your 100 greatest artists of a l time, a review o² your favourite covers, plus workshops from Jason Chan, Raymond Swanland and the mighty Genzoman'

Issue 101 November 2013



Let our sc-fi artists take you to strange, new wor ds: John Berkey Peter Elson and Chris Moore visit a ga axy called 'Inspiration', Our workshop sect on inc udes art from Ke th Thompson, Emma Viecel and Thom Tenery, and we chat to the artists of Imag nary Friends Studios

Issue 102 December 2013



Traditiona skills meet digital methods n Jean-Sébastien Rossbach's cover art, which also heralds a new section in the magazine that's devoted to br ng ng you the best n traditiona fantasy art. We talk to Keith Thompson and Daren Bader, while Jim Pavlec brings an Eerie goth c creation to l fe

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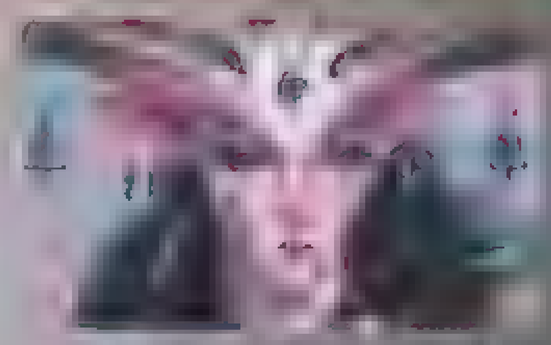
Beginner to Advanced-Level | Training Used by Top Artists, Schools & Studios | New Traini

INSPIRATION AND ADVICE FROM THE WORLD'S BEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX PRESENTS

FANTASY illustrator

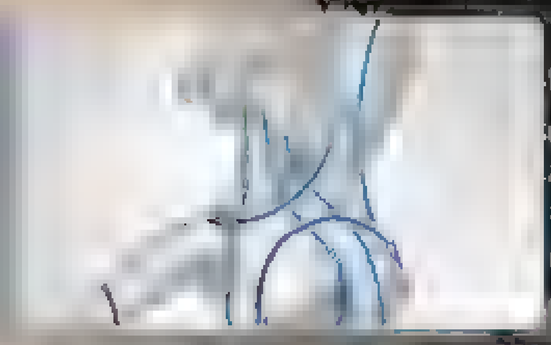
This issue:



100 FXPose Traditional
The best traditional art revealed



104 Creative Space
We explore a UK Drink & Draw



112 Anatomy advice
Depict the rhythm of a figure



First Impressions
Justin Gerard tells it like it is

CAPTURE THE

ESSENCE OF FANTASY ART

Veteran artist Tom Kidd takes

Page 106

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FXPosé Traditional

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL FANTASY ARTISTS

Aaron B Miller

LOCATION: US
WEB: www.aaronbmiller.com
EMAIL: aaron@aaronbmiller.com
MEDIA: Oils



The skills honed in traditional and digital art needn't be mutually exclusive. That's the view of Aaron, a Chicago-based artist who's a professional illustrator, working in both media to create book, game and concept art for the fantasy and sci-fi market. Though the paintings on these pages are exclusively traditional, an overlap of expertise is central to Aaron's work.

"The foundation," he stresses, "is the same for both: to create amazing images. When working on illustrations, I try to be true to myself. I think, 'How do I approach this so I'd want to hang this image on my wall?' This often leads me in directions the art director may not have thought of."

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"I love the Denver-inspired dragons. The sun-bleached rock, the waking dragon, the celebratory bunting… there's a fascinating story to engage with here, and I immediately want to know more."

Beren Neale, Digital Editor



1 DRAGONS OF RED ROCKS CANYON
Oil on panel, 24x36in
"As the artist guest of honour at MileHiCon in Denver, Colorado, I had the opportunity to create this painting that was inspired by the area."

CHIMERA SHAMAN
Oil on illustration board, 10x17in
"I attended the TLC Dan Dos Santos workshop. Dan pretty much kicked my ass to get this painted in the few days we had in Seattle."

FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imagnefx.com



FANTASY Illustrated EXPose Untold

Nick Keller

New Zealand
www.nickkellerart.com
nickbkeller@gmail.com
Oils



Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull, Avatar, The Hobbit trilogy: these are just some of the films Nick has worked on. He's a senior concept artist at Weta Workshop in Wellington. He spends his days working digitally, but paints with traditional media in his spare time, creating fantastical and surreal imagery, mainly in oils. He also illustrates album artwork for local bands.

"Being too comfortable in your work means it's likely derivative of something you've seen or done before," he says. "If I'm uncomfortable yet compelled to do art, I'm heading in the right direction."

1 THE DESCENT
Oil on canvas, 40x30cm
"An alien entity reveals itself to another civilisation. Its intent and physical nature is unknown. It began as a pencil study of form and shape with no preconception of what was to come."

2 BLOOD BECOMES FIRE 1
Oil on canvas, 30x40cm
"This is one of two album covers for Beastwars. It's based around a theme in the album, reflections on mortality, characterised here by an astronaut travelling through space and time."

3 BEASTWARS 1
Oil on canvas, 30x40cm
"Another Beastwars album cover. It encompasses the elements the band wanted: HP Lovecraft, pyramids, UFOs and psychedelic colour."

4 REVERIE
Oil on canvas, 30.5x38cm
"Reflecting on the feminine muse. Inspired and painted as part of a tribute book to the late Jeffrey Catherine Jones, an artist whose work I love."





FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imagine-fx.com





IMAGINEFX CRIT

"The Egyptian god, or perhaps an alien life form, erupting out of the pyramids is so dramatic in Nick's Beastwars 1 piece. The cloud colours and lightning suggest all hell is just about to break loose."

Daniel Vincent, Art Editor

SUBMIT YOUR ART TO FXPOSÉ

Send up to five pieces of your work, along with their titles, an explanation of your techniques, a photo of yourself and contact details. Images should be sent as 300DPI JPEG files.

Email: fxpose@imaginefx.com (maximum 1MB per image)

Post: (CD or DVD):
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30 Monmouth Street
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All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.



DRINK & DRAW: BOURNEMOUTH

Artist TOM PARRISH invites creatives from the English costal town of Bournemouth to join him for an evening of squiffy sketching

Drink & Draw is a simple concept: turn up, have a beer, do some sketches. Yet what began as a small gathering of friends – just four or five at early meetings – has grown to a 60-strong collective of local creatives. The event was set up by artist and illustrator Tom Parrish and takes place at Nest Space, an independent co-working studio in Bournemouth, England.

"Comic book makers, traditional fine artists, digital illustrators," Tom explains, "indeed, artists of all levels, disciplines and walks of life are invited down to hang out, grab a beer and talk art, while sketching and jamming with other creatives."

Before moving to the picturesque seaside town of Bournemouth, the artist lived in Bristol and wanted to recreate the sense of community he'd felt at similar events there.

"No artist is an island," Tom says. "Cabin fever tends to be rife among us artists, as we spend large amounts of time holed up in our studios, working away. We entice local creators to the event with the promise of good company – and beer. It's a great way to blow off steam, network and talk all things art, as well as get some sketching done."



Bournemouth's Drink & Draw began life as a few friends sketching in a local pub and has grown into a thriving community of artists.

The fortnightly gathering alternates between "sketch jams" and themed meet-ups – like a recent life-drawing session, with Dorset-based burlesque performer Miss Tease Cake. Several larger Drink & Draw events are planned in 2013, including a Christmas-themed get-together, and one in which an A5-sketchcard gallery will be created on the night and exhibited at Nest Space.

Go to http://ifxm.ag/drinkanddraw For more information on Drink & Draw Bournemouth, then visit www.nestspace.co to find out more about Nest Space's facilities and www.tomparrish.co.uk to see examples of Tom's personal work.

Creative Space D&D: Bournemouth



Mike Burgess had a productive evening at Drink & Draw, working on this character design, as well as producing figure studies of model Miss Tease Cake and a skull

Drink & Draw welcomes artists of any standing, from any discipline

NESTING SPACE

1 **Miss Tease Cake helps out the Drink & Draw crew with a range of poses.**

2 **Tattooists, fine artists, print makers and aspiring concept artists: all brought together by a love of drawing and drinking.**

3 **The Bournemouth D&D Crew jamming in the Nest Space workspace.**

4 **Everyone adds their own flavour to the artist c mix.**

5 **Since the first session, the Bournemouth D&D meet-ups seem to be fuelled by a shared love of jellybeans.**

DRINK AND DRAW

A collection of sketches by the Bournemouth attendees



Chris Byrne's beautiful coloured flower



Founder Tom Parrish spent his time on some nifty character designs

Frenetic line work by Tony Long, who focused his attentions on the rest of the group as well as the evening's model

Sarah Lou Goy produced this elegant figure study

This hook-nosed, spindly-necked creation is the work of Nick Galaxy

A wide-eyed skull, created by Mike Burgess

FANTASY illustrator

Workshops

Oils

PAINT A FANTASY BOOK COVER

TOM KIDD explains how to develop a narrative within a fantasy landscape painting

Story is key in my art. All else is secondary, but still greatly important. Calling my paintings narratives doesn't insult me because that's precisely what I want them to be

My goal with all paintings is to make the story and the paint handling interesting but not flashy, not distracting. Often my obsessive need to understand nature may cause frustration as I paint, but studying nature by painting gives me insights I'd otherwise miss. That may seem odd for someone who largely paints from his imagination, but painting



sharpens my observational skill, which will then improve future paintings.

The assignment is a book cover for a collection of Jack Vance's earliest stories. Mr Vance's writing career spans over 50 years and I've been reading his books since I was in high school. I've created many covers for his books and I most recently illustrated his classic science fiction novel, The Dying Earth, with 32 illustrations.

My approach for this painting will be to find a mood that fits the stories, one that illustrates no particular story but includes elements from many. Reading the book, I discover that it spans a wide variety of story types and years of writing. It's a more difficult task than I anticipated to find an archetypal scene that fits all my requirements. However, I know this author's writing well and I can see not only the scenes he describes, but also how his ideas will influence his future works. I choose those elements that speak well to the great author's future writing.



Tom has worked in all areas of the art field. He's produced hundreds of book covers, and has written two instructional art books: How to Draw and Paint Dragons, and OtherWorlds. Tom's won 2004's World Fantasy Award and eight Chesley Awards. www.spellcaster.com/tomkidd

1 The oblique approach

I know that the floating palace described in one story has future significance for this author, so I start with it even though it's working backward a bit. Once I've established a look for the palace (it's called a palace, but described as having the look of a castle) I come up with an entire scene. It will be a misty early morning setting: a palace hovers over a lake that appears as the sun rises, warming the water beneath, and this releases feathered streams of steam.



MATERIALS

PAINTS
Ivory Black, Paynes Gray, Davy's Gray, Titanium White (oil and alkyd versions), Flake White, Burnt Umber, Burnt Sienna, Italian Burnt Sienna, Mars Violet, Mars Red, Raw Umber, Spanish Earth, Orange Ochre, Cadmium Yellow (Light, Lemon, Medium, Deep), Alizarin Orange, Alizarin Yellow, Indian Yellow, Phthalocyanine Green, Viridian, Bohemian Green Earth, Sap Green, Cadmium Red (Light, Medium, Deep), Vermilion, Cadmium Scarlet, Cadmium Orange, Crimson Lake, Quinacridone Magenta, Manganese Violet, Purple Lake, Provence Violet Reddish, Turquoise, Phthalocyanine Turquoise, Manganese Blue, Turquoise Blue Deep, Phthalocyanine Blue, Ultramarine Blue, Manganes Blue

SURFACE
Pressed wood, gessoed

MEDIUMS
Drying linseed oil, small amounts of Liquin

BRUSHES
Bristles, Tuscans, Sable brights and Sable rounds

OTHER
Rags for wipe-away, softening and texturing

2 The value of thumbnails

Although I combine elements later in my drawing I do thumbnail sketches to firm up my composition. Thumbnails force me to think simply and organically. Otherwise I might obsess over details and forget the big picture. Never, ever forget the big picture which in other words is your main thrust. It's easier to lose your way than you might think.



3 Establish tonal masses

I draw my background separately and combine it with the palace in Photoshop. By developing the palace separately it's easier for me to magnify it from various perspectives. From there, I add grey values to establish my tonal masses. Your tonal masses should be established before your colours. They are the most important parts of any composition.

4 Seeking approval

As I work the previously unnamed collection is named. The title for the book becomes Minding the Stars. Now that 'stars' is in the title I decide they should be seen in the sky despite the time of day. Animal I've done a pretty sloppy job, but the publisher is in a hurry so I send him the sketch. He knows how my finished paintings look and sees my thinking in the rough sketch, so he approves it.

TEMPERATURE TRICKS
One way to keep sable brushes supple is to put them in a plastic bag and keep them in a freezer until you use them next.

sicurezzamag.com



5 The painting surface

Something irritating now happens. I'm gessoing over pressed wood or Masonite measuring 24x40 inches, and it goes very poorly. I mix in a little Raw Umber and Raw Sienna in the final layer gesso to give it a bit of colour. As I brush it on the gesso lifts up. I decide it's good enough and let it dry. Sadly, it's a poor example of what I'd like to show but a nice example of what can go wrong with surfaces and mediums. Of course, once it's dry I find my new jar of gesso. Oops. I've used a very old one! I test the surface to make sure it'll hold the paint and I find myself satisfied.

6 Lay in with paint directly

Over this surface I lay in a thin layer of Mars Violet and Titanium White mixed with a little drying linseed oil and then rubbed even thinner. This is my base colour. Rather than establish a clean drawing to paint over I lay in basic forms using large brushes. Utrecht Bristle and Tuscan series brushes (size 12). As the painting progresses I use smaller and smaller brushes.

7 Capture the light of the morning

In the early part of the morning you'll see the dominance of warm and cool colours rather spectacularly (movie people call this the Magic or Golden hour) so I push Phthalo Blue, Manganese Blue and Ultramarine Blue into the light Mars Violet to represent sky, shadow and water. For the palace itself I'm establishing form with Burnt Sienna, Manganese Blue and Titanium White for the shadows, and I simply wipe away paint down to my ground colour for the areas that are hit directly by light. This approach quickly establishes colour and form.



8 Fauna and flora

The left of the picture is a blotchy mess because I'm not sure what I'll do there. One story in the book describes the terraforming of a planet and the odd fauna and flora that comes forth. I'm still inventing what I'll put there, so I do a few quick sketches on the side to get me thinking about what I'll paint. The effect I'm going for is anything yet eldritch. A world that fits this author's words.



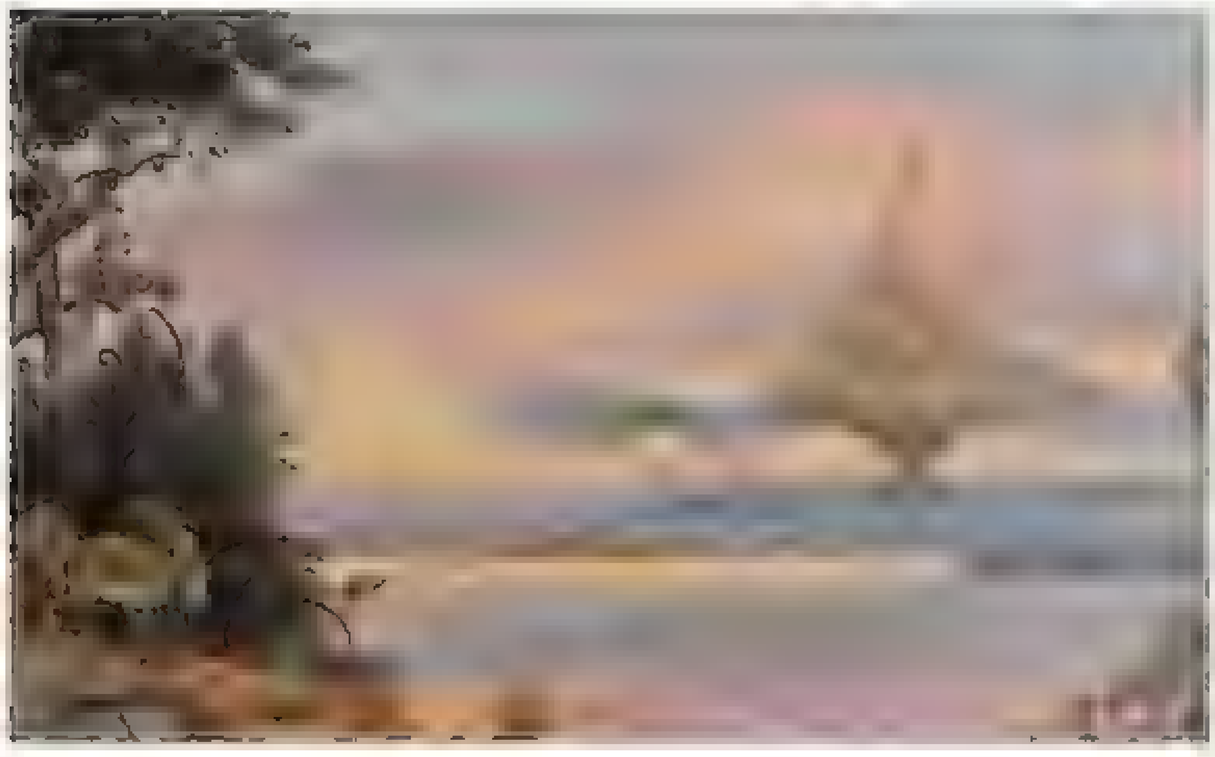


9 Tweaking, sharpening and softening

With the background and the palace established, it'll just be a matter of sharpening things up and tweaking the colours. I begin layering in the forms for the creatures and plantlife based loosely on my drawings. Mars Red and a variety of umbers are used. I decide that I want this area to look more mysterious so, I frame it with shadowy trees.

10 Be open to change

My approach is to have everything in flux. If something doesn't work then I change it, either by painting over it or wiping it away and repainting – I'm zeroing in on the emotions I want to elicit and enhance. I'm careful not to lessen the impact. Note how I modify the palace. Often I'm following the accidental form I see from my wipe-away process. As I work on the palace I'm keen to keep it in the distance. The rising fog will ultimately pass through it but it makes sense to do that last.



11 Smaller, ornate forms

Despite being off in the distance, the palace remains the main focus. I work into it, tweaking out the details. My forms started simple and now I add little complications to them. To give a design a pleasing feeling, you need to carefully place your areas of greater complexity in balance with areas of simple texture or flat colour. Details can be distracting, but these tiny, ornate aspects give the viewer another layer of thought to ponder. In other words, if you're careful, you can keep the big picture (the main narrative) and still have smaller ones.



THE NATURE OF OILS

Oils can run like water, be as smooth as butter, gooey as glue or be solidly dry. Use these properties to your advantage.

12 Simple, then complex forms

To add the details I want in the palace, I paint in darker areas of simple form, then add light areas of more complex form over them. Sometimes I reverse this and add dark details over light forms. Typically, I'm using a Sable bright for flat rectangular shapes followed by a Sable round for curvy filigrees.



ARTIST INSIGHT

THINK INK!

Besides closing your eyes to look inside your own head, a great way to create an inventive creature, alien or scene is to make a series of inkblots. Move the ink around a bit and add water. You may just find the thing you're looking for in this 'Rorschach'.

13 Fixing problems

The lower part of the palace has too many horizontal lines to work well with the fog passing through it, so I go about changing that. More vertical forms are added to the lower part of the palace. To help create a sense of layers, I paint the trees on the right-hand side very darkly with Ivory Black to bring them well into the foreground. It's the awkward kind of tricky water today and I can add in subtle highlights. Painting wet-on-wet has its rewards but certain things are just easier working over dry. I use Viridian, Burnt Umber and Paynes Gray to give a little more form to the trees on the left, but I later decide this is a bit too much.

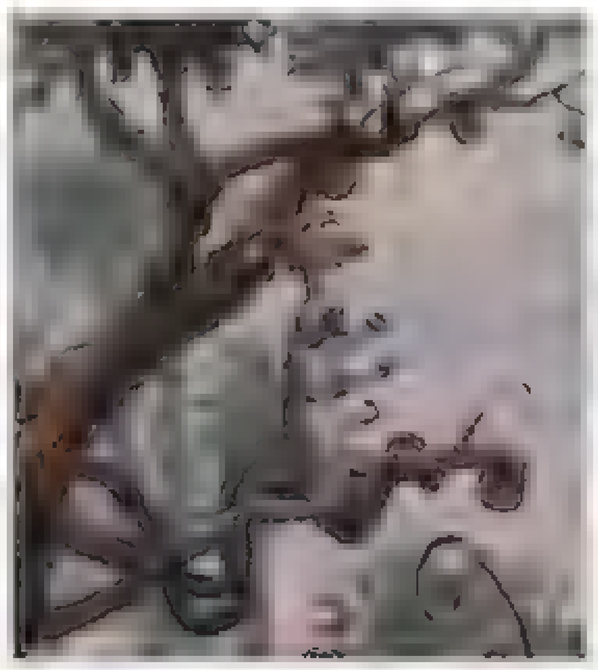


14 Imagining creatures

m m x ng and matching in a daydream ng montage of memories to create the look of the w ldlife Interm ttently l c ose my eyes to see what should do next Late y I've taken up the hobby of observ ng b rds, so my creat res take on some bird- ke qua ities Upon closing my eyes see the be y of a Northern Flicker and rea ise my long-snouted creature needs spots , smile at ts goofiness

15 The final bits

pa nt the foggy cloud layer that s passing through the palace with Montserrat Orange Flake White and T tan um wh te One more fly ng creature on the eft s added to break out of the darkness Then add more dark plant forms c ose to the r.ver g.aze n Paynes Gray and Ultramar ne B ue to coo the eft corner more the eaves of the tree on the left are sh fted to purple w th Manganese V o et Purp e Lake and Burnt umber and the hanging fruit s made red w th Cadm um Red and Alizarin Crimson







16 Clouds and stars

tweak the co ours n the clouds so they're a b t brighter add tiny birds n the distance (I paint, then dec de against many birds in the foreground as seen n my rough sketch, and w pe them away). add a butterf y with a r der flying n the foreground (it's n one of the stories) and I ncreas the volume of fog ris ng from the ake, Final y, I add the stars and the meteor The stars aren t spaced natura y but ke the r odd qua ity so I leave t as s



ART ST INSIGHT

KNOW YOUR PAINTS

With physica pa.nt there are no perfect primary colours, none are perfectly opaque, none are perfect y transparent or even perfectly permanent over time in mainta:ning their colour or opacity They can even change colour when they dry.

17 Knowing where to stop

As work further on the pa nting, add ng details, soften ng shadows and sh ft ng colours realise that none of what I'm do n mprov ng the narrative I want an exotic andscape that's both nv t ng and forebod ng, something that s a mystery worth nvest g at ng It s there so m tru y done now My final d on s to sign the pa nt ng w th my pseudonym Gnemo t fits the wor d of natural and man-made wonders that ve invented for my nom de p ume too perfectly not to.

Pencil · Ballpoint pen

FEEL THE RHYTHM OF A FIGURE

Discover how to apply rhythm and design to a figure drawing, and speed up your sketch process, with the help of CHRIS LEGASPI

Last issue, I revealed that gesture is the connection and movement between forms. Another way to describe this gestural connection is rhythms. Rhythms not only connect and relate forms together, but can also be a working method for laying in or constructing the figure.

Rhythms also represent a simplified model of human anatomy. When I study the body, I can clearly see the natural, rhythmic design of the muscles. For example, the neck muscles naturally flow from the head to the shoulders and torso, so I make sure to depict this connection in my drawing. Next, I can then connect the shoulders to the torso by following the natural rhythm of the chest muscle. If I continue to simply follow the design of the muscles, I can construct the figure in a rhythmic and elegant way.

Another advantage to working rhythmically is economy. By shifting my focus to rhythms, I start to look for big shapes and relationships. Because rhythms often group many individual parts together, like the figure and the legs, or the right arm to the left, I need fewer lines to construct the figure. This makes rhythms ideal for short poses when drawing from the model. It's also a great tool for quick sketches when drawing from life or observation.

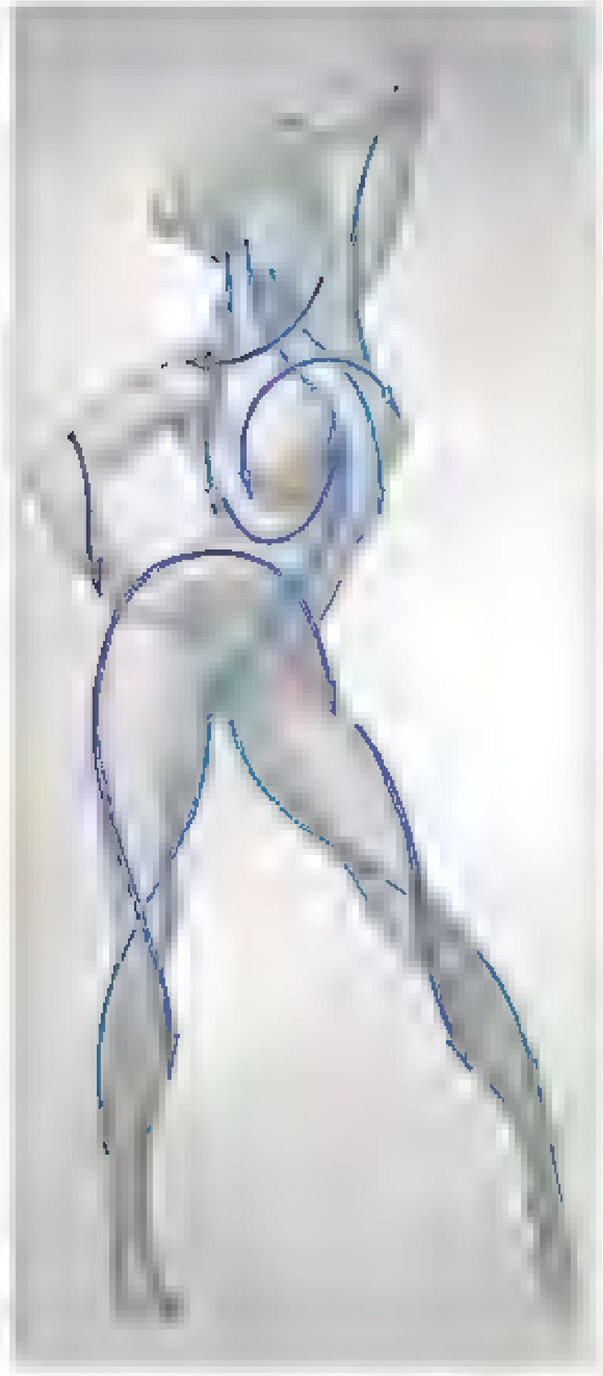
MATERIALS

- Smooth newsprint paper
- Carbothello pencil, black (or Conte B)
- Kneaded eraser
- Ballpoint pen
- Sketchbook

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES



Chris is a keen figure drawer and painter. He also loves sharing great information on art and picture making. www.freshdesigner.com



Anatomical rhythms

Rhythm from head to toe

1 Observe rhythms on the figure

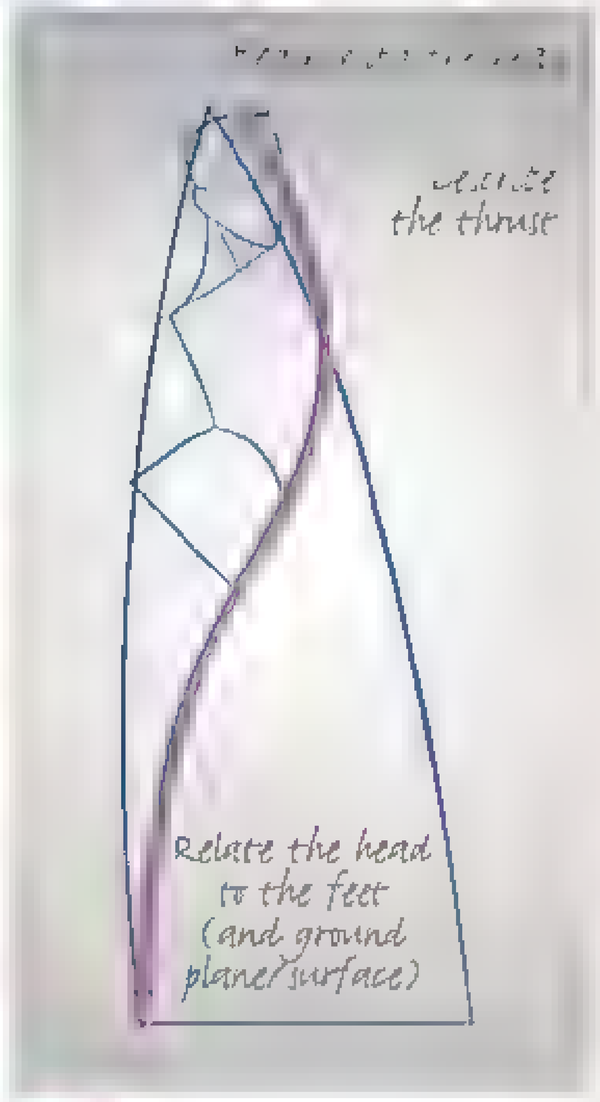
Rhythm of the limbs

ARTIST INSIGHT

TRACING APPROACH

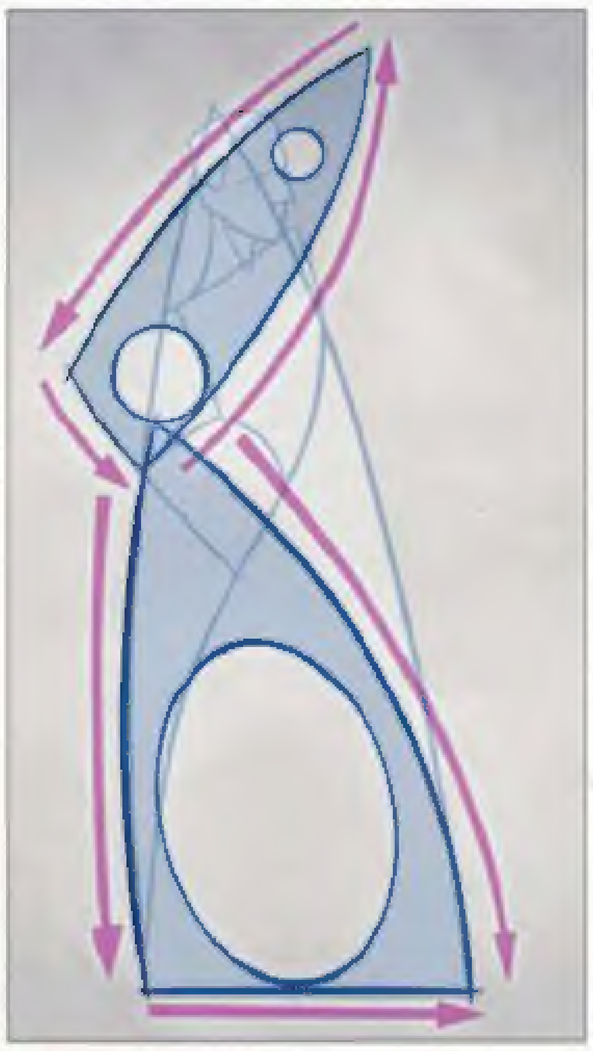
Using tracing paper or digitally, I like to draw rhythms over photos. This is great for studying anatomy and rhythms, and helps to prepare me for life drawing.





2 Lay-in the 'base' of the figure

the top of the figur … et to … s I begin the construct on of the body starting w th the 'thrust' or … the pose



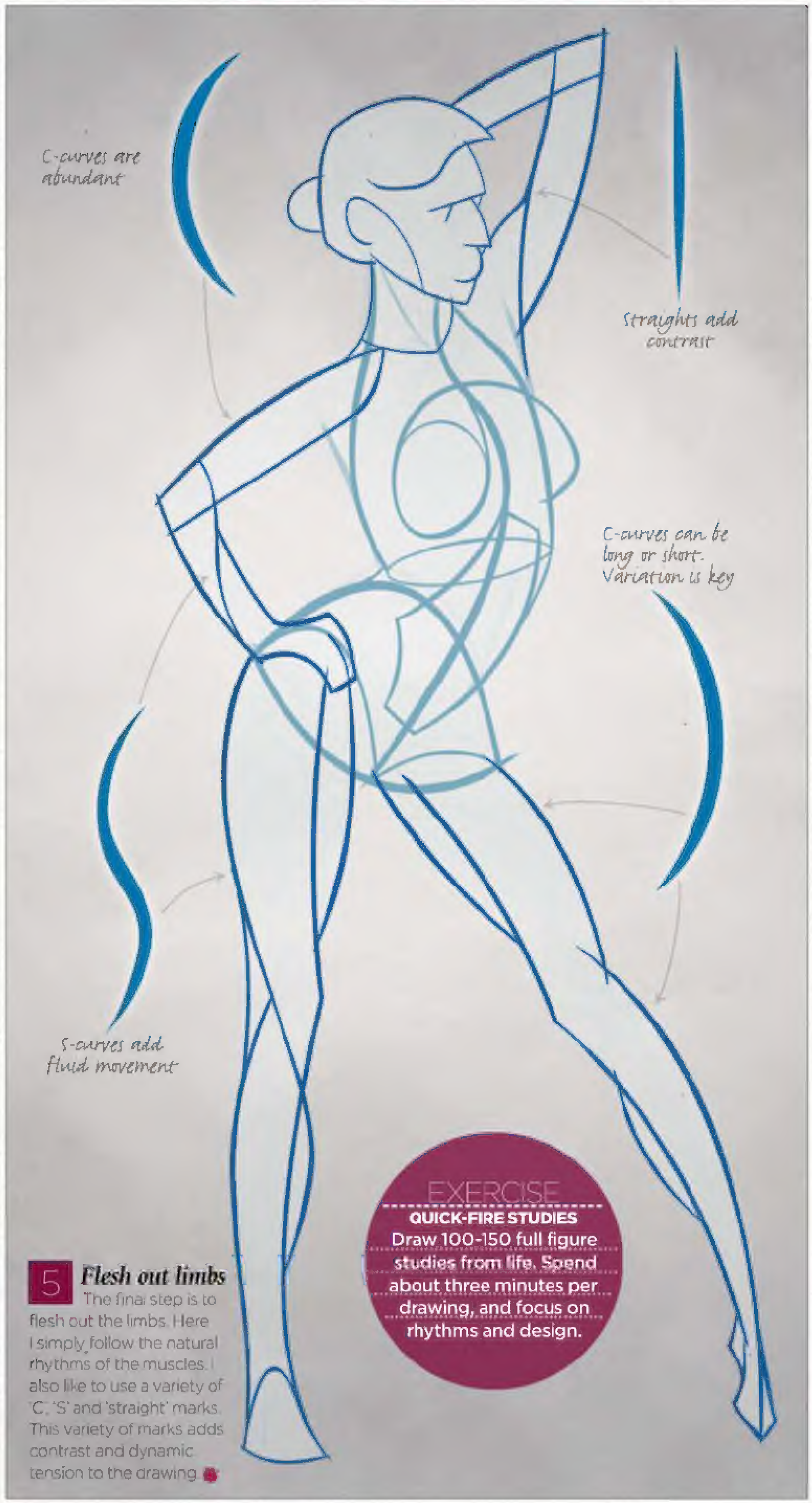
3 *Limbs and negative space*

I lay in the silhouette of the limbs using rhythms that connect and relate the individual parts of the limbs, like the elbow to the wrist and the hip to the foot. Once the shape feels accurate, I use a simple oval to cut out the negative space.



4 *Flesh out the torso of the female figure*

Once the silhouette is blocked in, I flesh out the torso. The neck naturally flows to the ribcage. The breasts naturally flow together and the abdominals naturally connect the ribs to the hips. I finish with the hips that naturally flow into the legs.



5 *Flesh out limbs*

The final step is to flesh out the limbs. Here I simply follow the natural rhythms of the muscles. I also like to use a variety of 'C', 'S' and 'straight' marks. This variety of marks adds contrast and dynamic tension to the drawing.

EXERCISE

QUICK-FIRE STUDIES

Draw 100-150 full figure studies from life. Spend about three minutes per drawing, and focus on rhythms and design.

LOOKING FOR THIS ISSUE'S RESOURCES? SEE PAGE 6

First Impressions

Justin Gerard

Known for his dragon and Middle-earth art, Justin talks artistic blues, crits and pyramid schemes



Do you have any rituals for starting a painting?
I start out every project by sacrificing a fruit bowl to my giant altar of artists-who-are-better-than-me. It's not a ritual, really. Just a guy dressing up in dark robes and burning some stuff in front of an idol. I'm just doing what the voices say I have to do or my painting will be cursed. No big deal. Actually, it's more often the end of a painting that has the most ritual. Most of the time a painting never lives up to the promise it had in its conceptual stage. So I tend to get depressed at the end of a piece and there's often more ritual that goes into countering this depression. Video games, biking, coffee... The best way to get out of this depression is to start thinking up the next painting.

When did you first realise you wanted to be an artist?
I always knew I wanted to create. I've always loved making things. But it wasn't until I met another artist in college who was making it in the professional art world, that I knew I wanted to do it for a career. Till then I didn't know you could get by on work-for-hire in illustration.

What was your first paid commission?
My first major paid commission was for a crazy doctor who wanted to make a book to help him sell people on his crazy pyramid scheme. I didn't realise while I was working on it what I was going on. The art requests were a lot of fun to work on and I never saw the text that was to accompany them. It wasn't until I had finished the project and he tried to pay me in "invigorating vitamins" and a "stake in the operation" that I realised what I'd been working on. Still, it was great fun and enough to convince me this was a career path I could take. The art, not the pyramid scheme.



BOAR RIDER
"I did this colour comp over the top of drawings that were already pretty tight – this is risky as it can feel locked in and there are less happy accidents."

Who was your first artistic crush?
Peter de Sève. I had followed a lot of comic guys before that, but not like him. Peter changed everything for me. His work just had such character and life. And there was such a clever take on people and society. Peter's work was very weighted on the drawing stage, which made it more accessible for me.

> "I'm just doing what the voices say I have to do or my painting will be cursed"



LANCELOT DU LAC
"Here I combined watercolour and digital, and for the first time the effect felt natural to me."

Do you remember the first image where you thought you'd nailed it?
I've never quite thought I've nailed it – there's always something to not be happy with. But there have been some pieces I've felt like I nailed some small, particular thing: maybe the technique, some effect, or combination of elements. While I was unhappy with certain elements of Lancelot du Lac (below), the overall feel was nice to me. From here I knew I could work in a classical way, but with modern tools such as Photoshop.

Do you remember your first bit of praise that spurred you on?
My family was always very supportive, but I can't remember anything specific. At high school I drew a Mexican Yosemite Sam for a friend, who loved it so much he got it tattooed on his arm. It got me interested in pursuing the idea of a career as an artist.

And your first knock back?
There would have been so many in high school. I was pretty awful when I got started and those knock backs helped keep any artistic ego I might have had in check. I visited Disney once. I didn't mean for them to see any of my work, I just wanted to meet the artists. Then suddenly my portfolio was being looked at by everybody. It was a waking nightmare, but the critical feedback was amazing. It helped me realise how important story is in artwork.

If you could go back to the start of your career, would you change anything?
I'd have sought out great contemporary artists much earlier on and tried to meet and learn from them, even if it meant paying them for their time.

To end, how do you know when an image is finished?
When I just can't do anything else. Or when the next image has to get started. Illustration is art under the circumstances. Sometimes we don't have a choice when to begin or end an image. It is rarely like, "I love it, it's perfect, now I should stop." It's often like, "Well, it's 4am and I've been painting for the past 36 hours. I think I'll call this one done."

To see more of Justin Gerard's work, visit www.justingerard.com.

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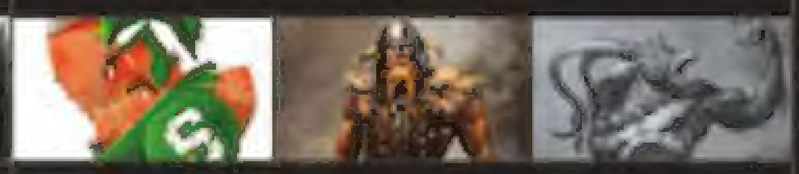
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